

THE Atlantic

DECEMBER 2005

WHY IRAQ HAS NO ARMY

WE CAN'T LEAVE UNTIL THE
IRAQIS HAVE ONE, THE BUSH
ADMINISTRATION SAYS—AND
THEY'RE NOT EVEN CLOSE.

SO NOW WHAT?

BY JAMES FALLOWS



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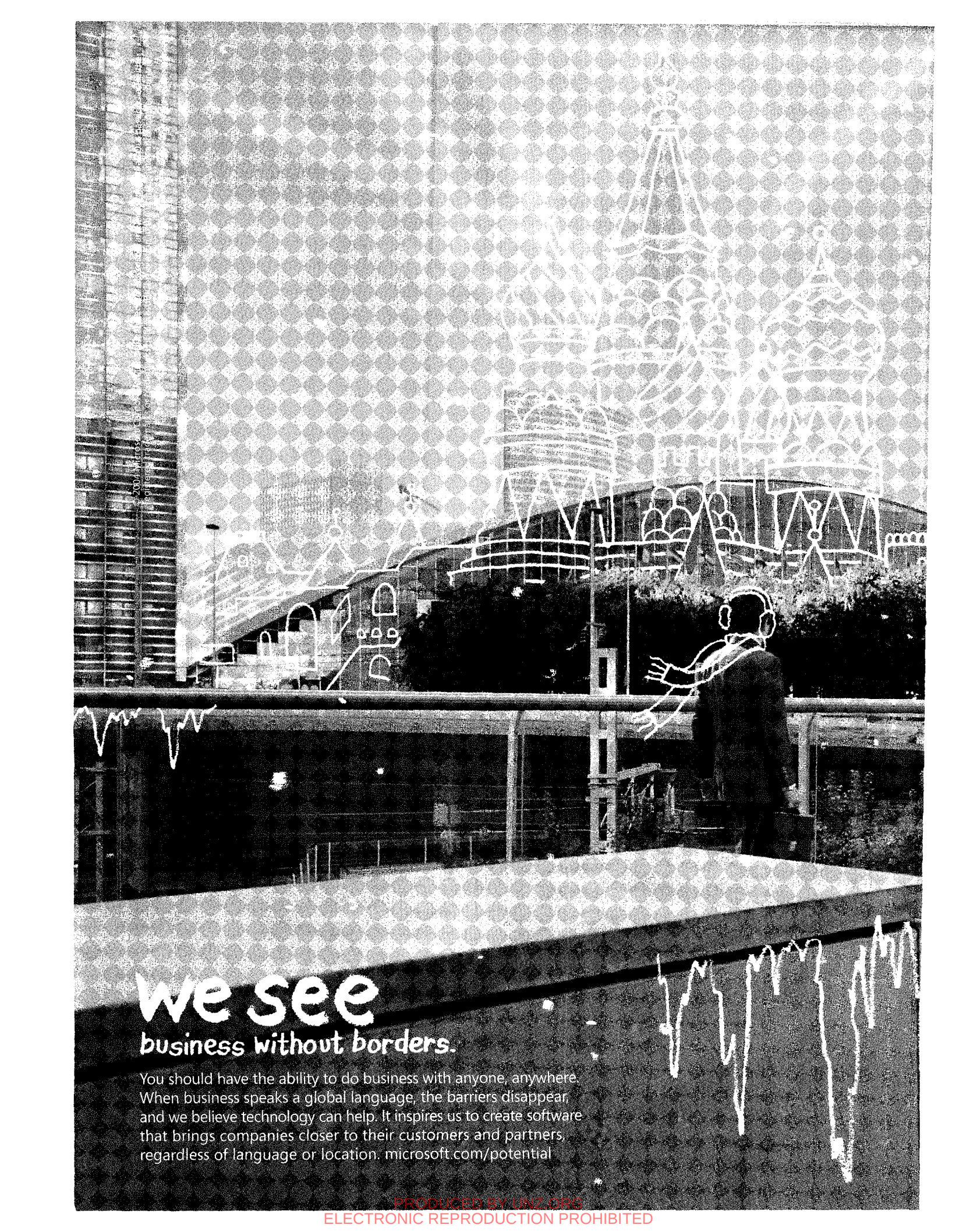
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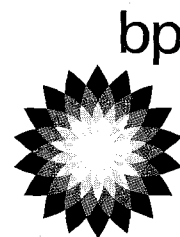
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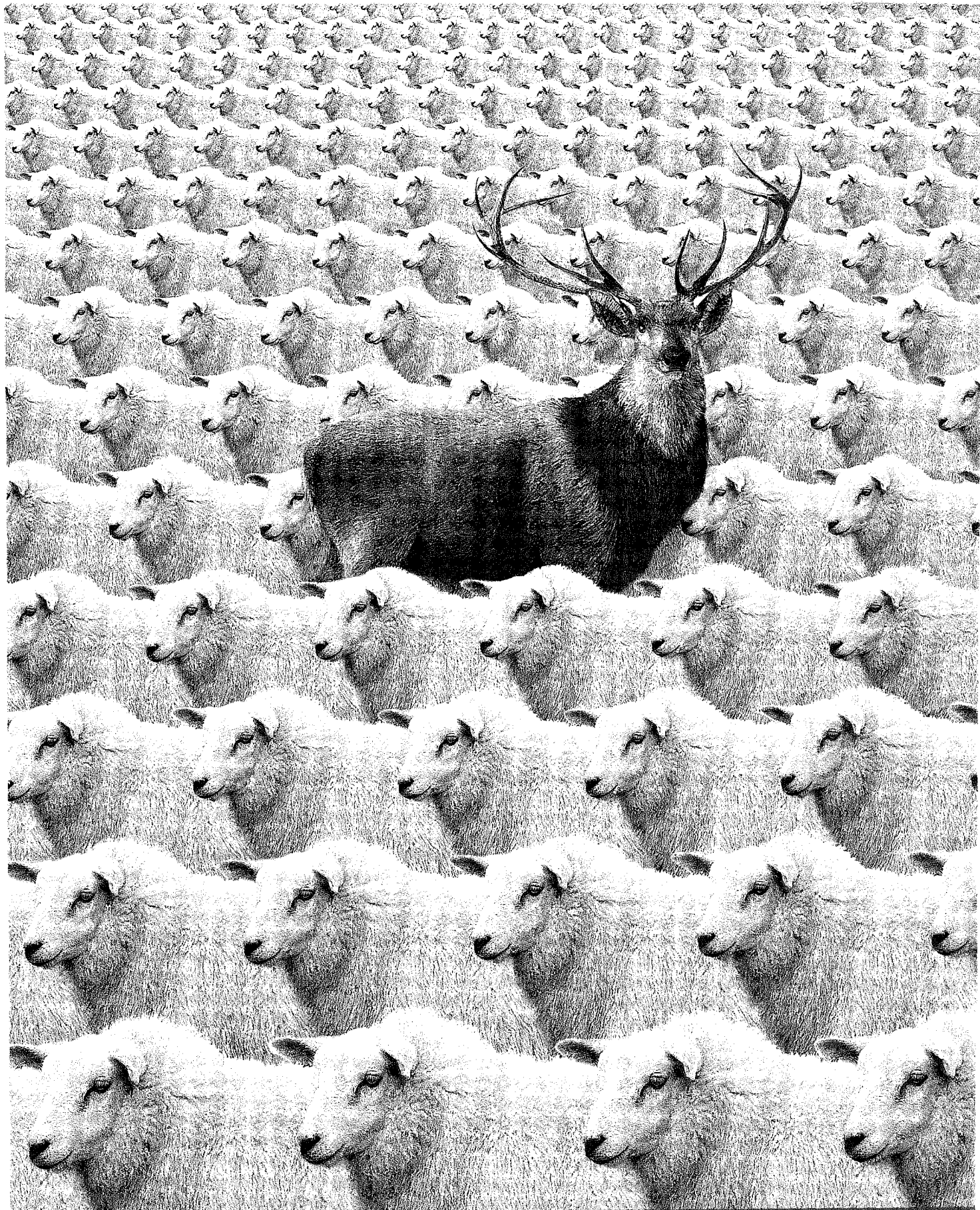
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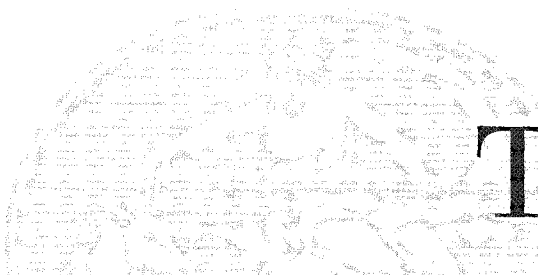
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Paul Bloom

The author of "Is God an Accident?" makes the case that our belief in God is a by-product of evolutionary adaptations gone awry.

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Books in Brief

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INTERVIEWS

Robert D. Kaplan

Kaplan talks about his new book, *Imperial Grunts*, and his stints with U.S. military units around the world.

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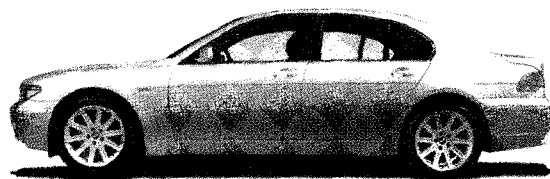
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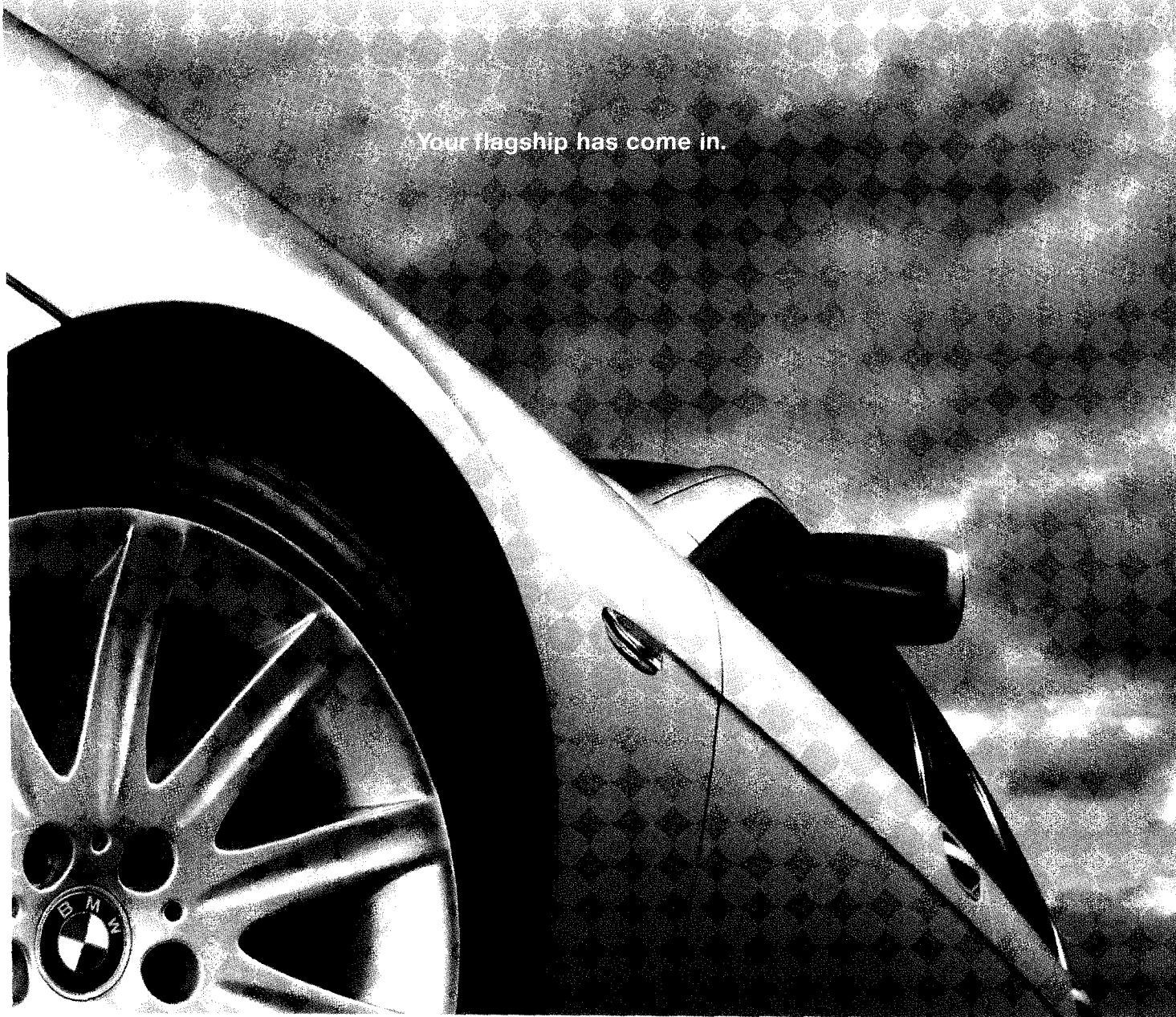
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77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

With his article in this issue, “Why Iraq Has No Army,” James Fallows completes a quartet of cover stories on issues concerning the Iraq War that together constitute a sobering—and decidedly unofficial—history of the Bush administration’s conception and prosecution of its policy in Iraq.

The first of these articles, “The Fifty-first State?” (November 2002), published long before the war had even begun, laid out the many challenges that would confront the United States in a postwar Iraq—a prophetic imagining of the calamities that have in fact ensued. A further, disturbing insight involved the mindset Fallows encountered as he did his reporting: within the pre-war administration even to ask about how to prepare for possible difficulties in postwar Iraq was seen as tantamount to being anti-war and disloyal to the administration’s program. “The Fifty-first State?” won the 2003 National Magazine Award in the public-interest category.

The second of the articles, “Blind Into Baghdad” (January/February 2004), brought to widespread attention the vast amount of thoughtful analysis and planning about the war and its aftermath—by the military, the State Department, universities, think tanks—that the administration chose simply to ignore in its rush to invade. These meticulous studies warned about everything from the catastrophic collapse of order in Iraq to the breakdown of the country’s water and power systems.

The third article, “Bush’s Lost Year” (October 2004), documented the Iraq War’s impact on the war on terrorism: it drained resources and attention from other efforts while at the same time making the central problem worse by turning Iraq into a terrorist recruiting field and a de facto marketing tool.

Now, in this issue, Fallows considers the administration’s pledge—that America will begin to “stand down” in Iraq as Iraqi security forces “stand up”—and asks how those security forces are coming along. The answer turns out to be that they hardly exist. Why? Once again the challenge was not anticipated. When the need for security forces became clear, the plan for training them wasn’t thought through. And even now, inexplicably, the situation is being addressed without the urgency it demands.

Readers of *The Atlantic* have seen the public reaction to

Fallows’s articles in our letters columns and in many press accounts. What they cannot see is the private reaction, corroborating Fallows’s assessments, in the form of off-the-record e-mails from people throughout the military and the intelligence agencies, in America and in Iraq. It will take years—and the release of documents, the rectification of memories, the loosening of tongues—before the Iraq War has its own full-blown version of *The Best and the Brightest* (1972), David Halberstam’s authoritative and haunting reconstruction of how the United States was led into, and

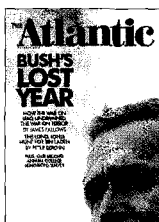
then mired itself ever more deeply in, the disaster of Vietnam. But the work of James Fallows already provides the framework.

In all his articles Fallows has focused on reporting the policy and planning side of the story—that is, the White House/Pentagon/Washington side—rather than on reporting from Iraq itself. That job has been handled in our pages by others, including William Langewiesche and Robert D. Kaplan. To this list we can now add Nir Rosen. Rosen’s short piece in this issue is a contrarian thought experiment, playing out the consequences of a sooner rather than

later U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. By way of background: Rosen speaks Arabic and has spent sixteen months in postwar Iraq, living mostly among ordinary Iraqis. The dynamics of the insurgency are of particular interest to him, and we expect to be publishing more from Rosen on that topic.

.....

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE Corby Kummer contributes another of his regular columns on food and wine—columns that readers will be able to look forward to in every issue rather than only four times a year. Kummer has been an editor at the magazine for more than two decades, working with writers as diverse as James Fallows and Garrison Keillor, Eric Schlosser and Ian Frazier. His food writing began as something of a personal sideline. Today he is recognized as one of the most original writers in an intensely competitive field—“a dean among food writers in America,” as the *San Francisco Examiner* called him. Kummer is a three-time recipient of James Beard journalism awards, including the prestigious M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award. His work in *The Atlantic* has led to two acclaimed books, *The Joy of Coffee* (1995; revised 2003) and *The Pleasures of Slow Food* (2002). —THE EDITORS



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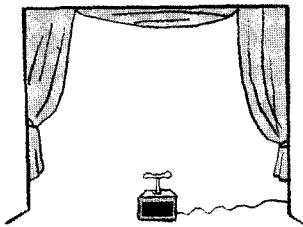


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DECEMBER 10

A Seamier Side of Nobel

Best known for inventing dynamite and creating and funding the Nobel Prizes, Alfred Nobel was also a playwright, though his work has (perhaps justifiably) gone unstaged—until today. In Stockholm, on the same day that Nobel's prizes are distributed, a small theater will stage his play *Nemesis*. The four-act anti-capitalist tragedy, suppressed as blasphemy in its time, features rape, incest, chemically induced visions of the Virgin Mary, and a forty-minute torture scene. Even the theater's director admits, "It's not Strindberg."

DECEMBER 13-18

Doha Nears Death

The World Trade Organization has what many call a final shot at realizing the ambitious Doha round of trade negotiations in Hong Kong this week. The plan,

established in 2001, initially aimed to free up markets worldwide by the end of last year, but foot-dragging by the United States and the European Union over farm subsidies spurred a coalition of more than twenty developing countries to derail Doha in 2003. The prospects for success this year appear dim.

DECEMBER 16

Novelist on Trial for Insulting Turkey

Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish author of the best-selling novel *Snow*, whose work has gained a wide following in the West, could receive a sentence of up to three years in jail when he stands trial today for "insulting being a Turk, the Republic, or the Grand National Assembly" (article 301/1 of the Turkish Penal Code). Earlier this year Pamuk told a Swiss newspaper that Turkey had killed 30,000 Kurds in separatist struggles during recent decades and a million Armenians in a genocide during World War I. Discussion of either subject is highly controversial and stringently policed in Turkey. A free-speech group and the European Union, which is engaged in membership

DECEMBER 15

Eyeing an Exit in Iraq

There has been talk for months about whether coalition forces will begin to withdraw after today's election, which under the most optimistic scenario will conclude the formal political rebuilding of Iraq. Poland's commitment



is set to expire at year's end, and Japan has agreed to wait until later this month to decide whether it, too, will pull out. Senior military officials from the United States and Britain (by far the biggest contributors to the coalition) have hinted that political success could bring troop drawdowns as early as next spring, although the official line from both countries remains that no withdrawal timeline has been established.

CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

negotiations with Turkey, have condemned the charges.



DECEMBER 26

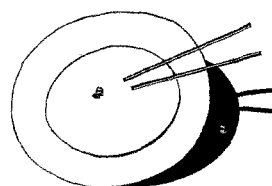
Tsunami Victims Mourned

In a macabre combination of empathy and self-promotion, Thailand will pay for the immediate families of foreign tsunami victims to attend two days of memorial ceremonies, supplying airfare and accommodations. The hope is "that they can see we are ready to welcome tourists again," according to the Thai prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. The government reports that tourism has recovered, although independent surveys suggest that certain afflicted areas are still struggling to fill hotels. December 26 will be devoted to mourning, and the following day to parties and music on the beaches.

DECEMBER 31

North Korea Refuses Handouts

By today Kim Jong Il's regime will stop accepting the food shipments it has received from the United Nations and other international aid agencies since the mid-1990s,



when North Korea was ravaged by famine. Instead the country, which says it no longer needs the food, will allow aid in the form of development money. The move will reduce the influence of the United States and other countries that have criticized the regime's human-rights record. According to UN data, North Korea's food situation has improved since the late nineties but remains ghastly: acute malnutrition affects seven percent of the population, down from 16 percent, and chronic malnutrition affects 37 percent, down from 62 percent. From 1995 to 1998 about two million citizens died of hunger.



DECEMBER 31

Dick Clark Still Won't Depart

In a rare concession to mortality, Dick Clark will be joined this New Year's Eve by his tousle-haired successor, *American Idol* host Ryan Seacrest, to watch the ball drop on Times Square. The eternally taut Clark, seventy-six, sat out last year's festivities after a minor stroke (Regis Philbin flew up from the Caribbean to cover). Seacrest will share host and executive-producer duties, and will eventually take over the thirty-four-year-old event.

—MATTHEW QUIRK



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lincoln's Depression

Thank you for Joshua Wolf Shenk's insightful and moving "Lincoln's Great Depression" (October *Atlantic*). This article captures more than just the history of the great man's mental state; it also provides comfort to those of us who suffer depression today. The author saw Lincoln's "melancholy" as part of his character, one playing a primary role in the way he viewed the world and approached the heartbreaking national issues that had defeated so many others. The moment when Lincoln said he desired to live and "link his name with something that would redound to the interest of his fellow man" was pure inspiration. Depression is ugly and deadly, and treatment is often necessary to keep it from becoming catastrophic, but it can express the values we hold and the way we will fight for them.

Lincoln's chronic depression also makes sense of the "pre-cognitive" dream he related three days before his murder. He told friends that in this dream he entered the White House and saw mourners around a corpse with a covered face. "Who is dead in the White House?" he asked one of the attending soldiers. "The president," was the answer. "He was killed by an assassin." Now we can see this dream not as a spooky prediction but instead as a function of Lincoln's melancholy. Anyone who has suffered depression will attest that such dreams are common.

Mark A. Wilson
Wooster, Ohio

The pivotal idea in Joshua Wolf Shenk's article is found in his remark "Today the connection between spiritual and psychological well-being is often passed over by psychologists and psychiatrists, who consider their work a branch of secular medicine and science. But for most of Lincoln's lifetime scien-

tists assumed there was some relationship between mental and spiritual life."

Only in modern times has this spiritual component been excised from consideration of mental health. Under today's paradigm Lincoln would have been placed on an escalating regimen of mind-altering toxins, electric shocks to the brain, or both. Under those circumstances where might Lincoln have experienced the discernment, the spiritual insight, the meaningful and integrative struggle?

The spirit is the seat of wisdom and the supreme cognitive agent. We ignore it at our peril.

Tony Baker
St. Simons Island, Ga.

Joshua Wolf Shenk's well-reasoned analysis mentions that Lincoln medicated himself with "blue mass," a compound containing elemental mercury that was often prescribed for depression, then known as "melancholia" (black bile). I and colleagues have published evidence that Lincoln took a sufficient amount of this potent neurotoxin to cause many of the signs and symptoms of acute mental distress documented by his friends, especially in the 1850s. Lincoln wisely stopped the medication on his own soon after his 1861 inauguration, because, he said, it made him "cross." We believe he might not have achieved his great leadership in the war years had he continued taking mercury.

Norbert Hirschhorn, M.D.
London, England

From his early days sitting around the courthouse, mesmerizing young lawyers with bawdy tales, to moments of levity during the Civil War, Lincoln saw humor as possibly the only way to mitigate the melancholia in his life. Whether using humor as metaphor or just relieving an awkward moment, he used it often. He poked fun at gener-

als, made light of his competition with Stephen A. Douglas for the affections of Mary Todd, needled self-righteous preachers, and never failed to endear himself to others with jokes about his humble beginnings.

While Joshua Wolf Shenk is right that Lincoln's early battles with depression would help him cope with future personal and political struggles, this great man also recognized that humor was perhaps the only antidote at a time when medicine wasn't a suitable alternative.

John Tredway
Corral De Tierra, Calif.

Joshua Wolf Shenk did not mention the prevalent medical thinking that Lincoln was a victim of Marfan syndrome, which may have contributed to his depression.

Although this genetic condition is not highly associated with depression as a single psychiatric entity, those with morphologic deformities of any nature do harbor such a psychopathology when other factors are involved. Depression is seen more frequently when Marfan syndrome strikes someone who has gained a certain level of celebrity, accomplishment, and responsibility, all of which apply to Lincoln.

Because Marfan syndrome is associated with Lincolnesque joint laxity, ocular pathologies, long bone and digital excesses, and arm spans disproportionate to body height, the suspicion that Lincoln had this condition has intrigued researchers for decades. I know of a group that got permission to borrow from the Smithsonian a fragment of Lincoln's skull bone that was retrieved after the assassin's bullet struck. A planned DNA study may one day tell us the full story.

Don Sloan, M.D.
New York Medical College
New York, N.Y.

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An interesting alternative analysis of Lincoln's mental, neurological, and physiological condition, titled "Abraham Lincoln's Organic and Emotional Neurosis," was published in the April 1952 issue of the *A.M.A. Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*. Written by Edward Kempf, M.D., this analysis, though dated, convincingly postulates that Lincoln's mental aberrations may have been symptomatic of brain damage caused by a blow to the head that he received at age ten, when a recalcitrant workhorse kicked him. He was deeply unconscious for a prolonged period afterward, and for a while was thought to be dead. A pronounced indentation on the left side of his forehead is clearly visible in his life mask.

Kempf's article isn't the final word on Lincoln's mental condition by any means, but it successfully connects many disparate mental symptoms, physical traits, and life events.

*Ken Higgins
Anchorage, Alaska*

Joshua Wolf Shenk replies:

Thanks to these readers for their thoughts. To those who wanted more, let me say that I discuss Lincoln's humor; his intersections with nineteenth-century pharmacology, and the Marfan question in my book, Lincoln's Melancholy, from which this essay was adapted.

The horse-kick incident—and the possibility that it contributed to Lincoln's mental makeup in adulthood—is worth considering. But Edward Kempf's work contains some of the most egregious excesses in retrospective diagnosis that I know of. Modern terms can, at times, help us grapple with Lincoln's story; for example, noticing that his experience meets the criteria for what we call "clinical depression" helps us understand its severity. But such a description says nothing about where Lincoln's suffering came from, or how he experienced it, or—perhaps most important—where it led him. No single theory can account for Lincoln's depth and complexity. And on the whole, I believe, the story of Lincoln's melancholy has more to teach modern science than modern science has to teach us about Lincoln's melancholy.

Roy Moore

The juxtaposition of Joshua Wolf Shenk's "Lincoln's Great Depression" and Joshua Green's "Roy and His Rock" (October *Atlantic*) is a powerful commentary on the history and condition of American politics. It seems we have not learned much from Lincoln's theology, or from his example.

George Bush, who has said he strives to follow the model of Lincoln, seems to have fundamentally misunderstood him. Lincoln's greatest strength was his humility—his belief that God's ways are inscrutable, and that it is prideful sin to claim with dogmatic certainty God's allegiance to one's own cause. How else can we explain the words of the Second Inaugural?

It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.

The notion of prideful sin is completely lost on Roy Moore and his version of the Republican Party. Inexplicably for someone claiming to be a follower of Jesus Christ, Moore prefers Moses' Ten Commandments to his own savior's Beatitudes. His certainty in his condemnation of those who envision a life devoid of the punitive justice of Mosaic law defines precisely the corrosive effect of religion on politics today.

The easy answer to Moore comes from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote in *The Path of the Law*, "The worst reason for doing anything is that it was done in this way during the time of Henry IV." That comment might apply to the time of Moses as well. However, Moore's politics are corrosive mainly because they reward a lack of reflection and promote an unthinking citizenry. In Roy Moore's America citizens are not called upon to evaluate the effectiveness of their institutions in achieving justice, or the usefulness of those institutions in establishing social arrangements and distributing power, wealth, or status. Furthermore, citizens are not required

to think carefully about themselves in relation to others. Moore's Mosaic legal order asks no one to be unselfish, to turn the other cheek, or to relinquish his rights in favor of forgiveness and community with others. These are all things for which Americans have striven (even when "knowing that [they] could never be perfectly attained," as Shenk notes of Lincoln). Moore's certainty is simply un-American.

In the end we all could do with a bit more of Lincoln's clarity, and with the knowledge that this clarity flows from uncertainty and humility.

*Hans J. Hacker
Nacogdoches, Texas*

After reading Joshua Green's article about Roy Moore, I finally understand what religious conservatives have been talking about when they describe a disturbing force weaving its way into American society. It is Moore and his activist followers. How paradoxical that religious conservatives are filled with passionate intensity about supposed demons stripping away their right to worship, just as one of their own is rising steadily to awesome power on a crest of purely biblical fervor. If there really is a liberal effort to undermine religious worship, it lacks all conviction.

During the decades when our government was supposedly controlled by more liberal forces, religious Americans did not see their freedoms abridged. Most liberals, whether religious, agnostic, or atheist, would be appalled at a government that took away the rights of others to worship. However, if the Mooreians were to gain complete power in the United States, I fear they would alter our lives absolutely. Moore believes that he possesses not only the vision of the universal creator but also the purest understanding of the philosophies of our nation's founders, and he has grafted these beliefs onto a frightening anger at political ghosts that he says are out to destroy the pious way of life. Just imagine for a moment all branches of our government run by people like Roy Moore. According to him, his own interpretation of the law, of history, of religion, all deserve greater weight than the

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collective knowledge and judgments of everyone else.

*Matthew Schenker
Northampton, Mass.*

Judge Roy Moore claims to be a lawyer, but his arguments against the courts are wholly untruthful.

The courts have never prohibited prayer. They have prohibited government interference in the religious beliefs and non-beliefs of public school students. As a religious and spiritual people we should rejoice that the courts are protecting us from well-meaning but often blasphemous interference by local school boards and educational bureaucrats.

*John King
Austin, Texas*

Joshua Green reveals in passing that the people of Alabama were not, after all, charged for the installation of Roy Moore's marble Ten Commandments. Yet does Alabama law permit the chief justice to decorate the supreme-court building (stealthily, under cover of darkness) according to his private tastes? It's not an idle question.

If not, then maybe Moore's profoundly arrogant action should have been challenged on the more limited ground that he lacked legal authority. Mightn't that approach have denied this cartoon demagogue the martyrdom he so avidly courted?

*David Dunlap
Kansas City, Mo.*

Joshua Green's article refers to George Wallace's stand against federal agents "at the Birmingham schoolhouse door." This stand took place in 1963 at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, not in Birmingham.

Otherwise, congratulations for as clear a description of Roy Moore and his followers as I've seen recently.

*Thomas Scales
Hoover, Ala.*

Joshua Green writes that Roy Moore attended West Point "on scholarship." I assume Moore provided that information to demonstrate his merit even in his youth. However, everyone who attends one of our military academies, includ-

ing West Point, does so "on scholarship," if that means not paying tuition. That has been true as long as those academies have existed. Cadets do not pay to attend, and they receive a monthly stipend.

*Julia Belt
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.)
Monona, Wisc.*

Joshua Green writes, "In every Moore crowd an undercurrent of messianic zeal is detectable, and here a few zealots buttonholed passersby, animated by communist infiltrations and dark tidings of the Bavarian Illuminati." But he provides no explanation of who the Illuminati are.

Adepts believe that the Illuminati are a shadowy cabal of European Jewish bankers and secret fraternities such as Skull & Bones that have stage-managed world events since the late eighteenth century. This notion of Jews' managing the world is the same one that appears in the old Russian forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

*Martin B. Rosensky
Silver Spring, Md.*

In "Roy and His Rock," Judge Rochester's old signs with the slogan "Like a Rock" were presented as evidence of Roy Moore's hold on the state. Yesterday I called Judge Rochester. The slogan was a play on his name and a shortened quote from Thomas Jefferson. Judge Rochester is a Democrat and might even accept the liberal label. We aren't all Roy fans in Alabama.

*Dick Israel
Wedowee, Ala.*

Roy Moore may be many things, but duplicitous is not one of them. I applaud his honesty and his contribution to the marketplace of ideas (the frightening quality of his ideas notwithstanding). While some of his fellow evangelicals try to disguise their preference for governmental displays of religion (for example, by arguing that several hundred Decalogues posted on public property are not public endorsements of religion but, rather, mere artifacts of Cecil B. De Mille's 1956 scheme to promote *The Ten Commandments*), Moore brings his arguments in through the front door. If we

are to have a national debate about the role of religion in public life, it should be in such candid terms.

*Paul Costa
Philadelphia, Pa.*

When I read the piece on Judge Roy Moore, I was treated to an amazing piece of trivia: the curious "fact" that the granite monument, while on the road, was subject to "what truckers call 'fuck bugs' (*Plecia nearctica* to entomologists), which swarm *in copula* for hours at a time, especially near the Gulf, and as a consequence—truckers and entomologists agree—make twice the splat of anything else you're likely to encounter."

It is just a little odd to find the F-word in the leading paragraphs of an article about the Ten Commandments. And a little odd that in my lifetime I have never heard them referred to as anything other than "love bugs." (My father-in-law is a retired trucker, and surely he would have let that one slip somewhere along the line.)

They don't actually pack twice the splat, either. There's not much to them—it's just that there are zillions of pairs of them hurtling to their little deaths from roughly Memorial Day to the first cool days of fall.

*Dianne Smith
Baton Rouge, La.*

Joshua Green replies:

David Dunlap raises an interesting question, and one that Moore anticipated and answered in his book: Who gets to decorate the Alabama Supreme Court? Moore claims that state law (Alabama Code 1975, Section 41-10-275) grants the chief justice an additional title—lessee of the Alabama Judicial Building—that gives him the right to designate office and parking spaces and decorate the building.

Julia Belt is right, of course, to point out that all West Point cadets are "scholarship" students. My use of the phrase was intended to emphasize that Moore could not have attended college without financial support—in his case richly deserved. My thanks to Thomas Scales for the correction, and to Martin Rosensky for illuminating the Bavarians. As for Dianne Smith, although I'm willing to accept that her father-in-law is a higher breed of trucker,



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I can assure her that the ones I encountered called them "fuck bugs." And it doesn't take an entomologist, or even a mathematician, to spot the error in her assertion about splat size: by definition any pair of bugs makes twice the splat of a single one.

Future of Oil

Clive Crook's article "Does Oil Have a Future?" (October *Atlantic*) concludes that "the best remedy ... is a tax that pushes those costs back to the consumer ... a gas tax. Its time is coming." The analysis is correct and the proposed solution moves in the right direction, but it is inadequate. What's needed is not a flat gasoline tax but a graduated tax aimed at consumption excess.

When Congress refused to discourage the national proclivity for SUVs and big pickup trucks, it demonstrated that it would not do anything to impede the American love affair with the automobile. Efforts to get Americans out of their cars and onto public transport have been signally unsuccessful. And Americans have had little incentive to conserve gas or come to grips with the pollution created by automobile use. Gas has been cheap until recently, and individual ownership of cars gives us unparalleled personal mobility. Auto use is also driven by our tendency to live far from our work.

Yet the current experience of paying more than \$3.00 a gallon for gas foreshadows the possibility of change. We could provide a market incentive for smaller and more efficient gasoline-powered cars by adopting a gas tax that charged drivers according to the efficiency of their vehicles.

Under this system a car getting fifty miles to the gallon might be taxed for gas at \$2.00 a gallon, whereas a car getting forty miles to the gallon would pay, say, \$2.50 a gallon. A Hummer getting fifteen miles to the gallon would be taxed at something like \$15 a gallon. The tax could be graduated literally by the mile and should increase geometrically. The technology would involve implanting a chip in the gas tank of every vehicle, which would be encoded with its gasoline consumption per mile. Every gas-pump nozzle in the United States would carry a chip that could read the

chip embedded in the car, and set the tax accordingly.

This sort of tax would have an immediate effect on drivers' choice of vehicles. It would also reduce "externalities" in the form of pollutants.

*William H. Friedland
Santa Cruz, Calif.*

Clive Crook's comment on the future of oil is sensible and to the point. But he makes a serious error in stating that energy companies "are big investors in clean or renewable fuels such as wind, solar, hydrogen, and biomass." Hydrogen is not a fuel. It is manufactured, largely from natural gas, at a cost of more than twice the energy recovered when it is burned in a fuel cell. So for every 1,000 BTU expended you get less than 500 BTU back. Using electricity from renewable sources to extract hydrogen from water is even less efficient: only one third of the original energy is recovered from the fuel cell. Storing energy in a lead-acid battery is much more rewarding.

In the same issue of *The Atlantic*, Dow Chemical has an ad bragging that GM's hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicles have "nearly twice the efficiency of a conventional vehicle." That is true, but because hydrogen production has an efficiency of less than 50 percent, the final energy consumption is the same for both.

This is not a trivial complaint. Billions of dollars will be spent on developing fuel cells and associated hydrogen infrastructure, with substantial government support. This is bad public policy, because it is a fake solution to our energy problem. Since well over 90 percent of hydrogen production will be from natural gas, conversion to hydrogen-powered vehicles will do little to reduce fossil-fuel consumption and carbon-dioxide production. It merely shifts our sights away from oil as our primary energy source—a goal that could be accomplished by using natural gas itself as an automobile fuel.

*A. R. Martin
Fort Myers, Fla.*

Clive Crook says that the use of ethanol for fuel "isn't very clean." I have also noticed other energy experts declaring that production of alcohol fuel has a negative energy return. Either these

people don't know chemistry or thermodynamics, or they don't know how an old-fashioned still worked. They are probably referring to synthetic ethanol. You don't have to burn hydrocarbon fuel or use electricity to make alcohol.

Ethyl alcohol—the drinking kind as well as fuel—is made by fermenting natural plant carbohydrates. The grains or juices that are fermented are produced by plants using sunlight, water, carbon dioxide from the air, and nitrogen and minerals from the soil. Oxygen is released as the plants grow. If you burn the plant material or use solar energy to power the distillery, you get energy from the alcohol that was created totally by solar energy. When the alcohol is used as fuel, you combine the carbon with the oxygen that the plants generated in the first place. The minerals (ashes) from the plant material can be returned as fertilizer. The water is returned to the atmosphere, and the heat taken from the sun is returned to the environment. The nitrogen oxides from the plant combustion may have to be scrubbed, but these can be handled. At the end of one growing season nothing has been done to the environment.

*James Baker
Big Cove, Ala.*

Though I agree with much of what Clive Crook presents in his critique of the recent energy bill, I must take issue with his statement that "the science of global warming is nothing like as settled as the environmental movement's spokesmen and media followers would have people believe." Within the community of peer-reviewed science no debate remains regarding global warming. It is considered scientific fact. Look at the fate of glaciers globally, the increased intensity of hurricanes, the global increase in seawater temperatures, and the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Only research backed by oil and coal funding still supports the idea that global warming might not be induced by human beings.

By the way, Portland has decreased its emissions of greenhouse gases and has more than complied with Kyoto Protocol reductions.

*Maureen Ray
Portland, Ore.*

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Clive Crook's conclusion that a gas tax is exactly what the United States needs is as true and timely as it is unpopular. Like Crook, I have found myself arguing for the immensely unpopular position that some things are best handled by government, and that issues such as energy use will require some taxation. His suggestion that doubt persists about global warming, however, is one I find a tad disingenuous.

*David Ostergren
Flagstaff, Ariz.*

Clive Crook says that even if we were certain of global warming it would be hard to say "exactly what one ought to do about greenhouse-gas emissions." But for years concerned scientists have advocated a number of steps that we should take—measures that would be to our benefit even if global warming did not occur. We know many things we ought to do; all we need is the will to do them.

When our supply of oil was threatened by a Saudi Arabian embargo in the 1970s, we promptly reduced our oil consumption by requiring auto manufacturers to increase their miles-per-gallon ratings. These CAFE (corporate average fuel economy) standards are still in existence. With the recent development of hybrid engines and other technologies we could substantially tighten the CAFE standards, and this time we should include pickup trucks and SUVs.

We are successfully producing some of our energy from wind turbines and could produce much more if we made permanent the modest subsidy this now receives. We know how to manufacture more energy-efficient appliances and build houses that require less energy, but the payout does not make most of these options attractive. We need government regulation to reduce our use of oil.

*John Burton
Washington, N.J.*

I liked Clive Crook's article until the last paragraph. A gas tax is the wrong thing at the wrong time. First, a tax on gasoline at the pump is a regressive measure that I reject on moral grounds alone. It is a flat tax (always immoral), which requires poor people—who must have gas for survival—to pay at the

same rate as the wealthy do for their RVs, SUVs, Hummers, and other wasteful playthings. Second, it is ineffective; the poor, the rich, and the upper middle class will not change their consumption. Only the lower middle class will feel the pinch. Third, it will increase crime in the form of drive-aways, siphoning, and even a black market.

I propose just the opposite of Crook's solution: We should ban all taxes on gas at the pump and restore the lost revenue by taxing vehicles. Excluding only heavy commercial trucks, construction and farm equipment, and commercial buses (all of which require special attention), we must impose a surcharge or bonus on vehicles based on their EPA mileage figures, as follows:

10 mpg	\$30,000 surcharge
10–19 mpg	\$20,000 surcharge
20–29 mpg	\$10,000 surcharge
30–34 mpg	\$5,000 surcharge
35–39 mpg	\$5,000 bonus
40–49 mpg	\$10,000 bonus
50–59 mpg	\$20,000 bonus
59 mpg	\$30,000 bonus
<i>(not to exceed purchase price)</i>	

Bonuses would be paid only when a new vehicle is purchased; surcharges would be paid at every resale as well. Moreover, all vehicles subject to a surcharge would require a \$1,000 to \$5,000 annual license-and-registration fee, while vehicles subject to a bonus would have these fees waived, would be exempt from sales taxes, and would get reduced insurance rates.

*Ron Zimmerman
Pinetop, Ariz.*

Like the energy bill he dissects, Clive Crook fails to grasp the market transformation taking place in the energy industry. A narrow focus on commodities such as oil misses the move away from centralized production and processing to "distributed energy"—a model based on small-scale, network-oriented technologies at or near the customer's home or business.

We are in the beginning stages of a technological revolution much like the *Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century*. Technologies such as solar energy, fuel cells, sensors, batteries, and power electronics will have the

same impact on how we live and work as autos and light bulbs did when they were introduced. Why? Because they are more efficient: by using less to make more, these technologies promise a less polluting, less costly future while providing more heat, more comfort, more convenience.

If this vision is to be fully realized, increasing the gas tax is not the answer. Government intervention in pricing has caused endless distortions in the market, making it difficult for customers to evaluate new technologies against old ones. Energy policy, insofar as there needs to be one, should focus on leveling the playing field for new technologies.

*Jamie Wimberly
CEO, Distributed Energy
Financial Group
Washington, D.C.*

I question Clive Crook's views on the Kyoto Accord. Anyone who looks at the long list of states that ratified and brought it into force would know that Europe's commitment to that treaty is shared by dozens of states around the globe, including our enlightened neighbor Canada.

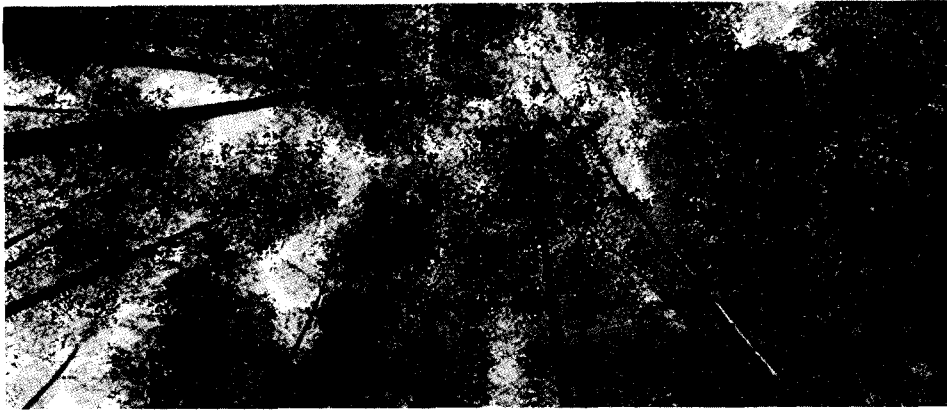
No one would seriously argue that the Kyoto Accord goes far enough to effect the reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions so urgently required. But it is a start, and it provides an important arena for international cooperation. In this sense the Kyoto Accord is most certainly not a "bad model."

Crook's proposed heavy tax on petroleum products certainly has merit, but only if the burden is shared by those businesses that profit from the production and use of fossil fuels. Placing the entire burden on the consumer is as regressive as the idea of substituting a sales tax for our current progressive income tax.

*Fred Drucker
Reno, Nev.*

Triumph at Trafalgar

Christopher Hitchens ("Triumph at Trafalgar," October *Atlantic*) mentions that in June a mock sea battle took place in the waters off Portsmouth, and the rival fleets were code-named "Red"



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and “Blue” in order to avoid offending the French. I believe this may have been the intention of Tony Blair’s pusillanimous government, but things did not turn out that way.

From my seat in the main hospitality area overlooking the Solent from South-sea Common, I listened to a robust commentary provided by BBC Radio Solent, while the tall ships approached each other as darkness fell. The commentator told it like it was when describing what Nelson and his fleet were up to, as well as what was happening on Admiral Villeneuve’s ships. His graphic account gave us all the gory details of this famous victory, with no mention at all of Red and Blue fleets.

*Nigel Sitwell
Chichester, England*

Alas, although Christopher Hitchens may have visited HMS *Victory* in Portsmouth as a small child, his memory of this most holy of British shrines is imperfect. Nelson’s *Victory*, the world’s oldest commissioned warship, is indeed in Portsmouth, but it is not, as Hitchens says, “moored as a floating museum.” Rather, it is permanently enshrined in Dry Dock No. 2. The U.S. Navy proudly and correctly claims the USS *Constitution* as the world’s oldest commissioned warship afloat.

*Jeff Tonn
Tacoma, Wash.*

In his review of *Seize the Fire*, Christopher Hitchens characterizes Spanish sailors as “little better than serfs,” led by an incompetent officer corps. This assertion completely ignores modern research into the organization and operation of the Spanish navy, the most accessible of which is John D. Harbron’s *Trafalgar and the Spanish Navy*. When Nelson famously said, “The Dons may make fine ships; they cannot however make men,” after visiting the Spanish fleet in Cadiz in 1793, he was referring not to the quality of Spanish sailors but to the lack of them, for as often as not crews were diminished by disease and other factors. Until 1800 the most famous one-eyed, aggressively brilliant naval tactician and amputee who died from wounds sustained during his final battle was Spain’s Admiral Blas de

Lezo, who turned back the British fleet at Cartagena de Indias in 1741.

*Larrie D. Ferreiro
Fairfax Station, Va.*

Christopher Hitchens refers to the Napoleonic War as “the first of the world wars.” Not so. The Seven Years War was the first world war, simultaneously fought in North America, Europe, the Caribbean, and India.

*Martin Hollander
Lindenhurst, N.Y.*

BHL

Seduced by the pull quotes in the October issue of *The Atlantic*, I was eager to become the fly on the wall in the room where we would learn, as promised, “What separates [Bernard-Henri Lévy]—radically—from Bill Kristol?”

Instead, after Lévy dismisses Kristol as an intellectual lightweight by virtue of his American-style attractiveness and vivaciousness (unbecoming an intellectual as envisioned on the Continent), he tells us that he “senses” Kristol is annoyed when he mentions something about the *Weekly Standard*; that he “senses” Kristol thinks a European can’t handle the mingling of politics with the “trash” of the Clinton scandals; and, finally, that “Bill Kristol is listening to me, but I sense I’m not convincing him.”

I wish I could have some sense of what Bill Kristol actually said, so I could judge for myself. I sense that, as so often on this journey, Lévy went to Kristol with a very clear idea of what he was going to find, and that there was no sense in not finding it.

*Ronald D. Coleman
New York, N.Y.*

When Bernard-Henri Lévy says that he “can’t imagine the principle of precaution so poorly applied” in his country as it is in the United States (in reference to natural disasters such as Hurricane Andrew), I wonder if he has forgotten France’s lack of response to the August 2003 heat wave, in which 14,802 people died! To my knowledge no natural disaster has ever caused such loss of life in the United States. In Geor-

gia we have air-conditioned “heat shelters” (typically churches or community centers) that serve many elderly people. Thanks to these shelters we rarely have heat-related deaths among the elderly, even though the temperature rises above 100 on many days in a typical summer.

*Julia S. Key
Augusta, Ga.*

Though his series of articles was enjoyable, Bernard-Henri Lévy has missed something essential: that the business of America is business. He spent his time with journalists, academics, politicians, and a few of the “common people,” but not with the business leaders who provide so much of America’s creative energy in all spheres, including government policy, intellectual thought, and the arts. Though Lévy strives with some success to relate to the American world view, this omission is classically French in its oversight. The best and brightest in America are not always (not often, some would convincingly argue) found in politics or academia, as they are in Europe; rather, they are found in the dynamic enterprises that are reinventing human communication, creating new fields devoted to things such as the assessment and financing of risk, and providing the management skills needed to maintain vibrant artistic and academic institutions. Did Lévy try without success to meet such people, or did he simply overlook them?

*Jonathan Murray
Shaker Heights, Ohio*

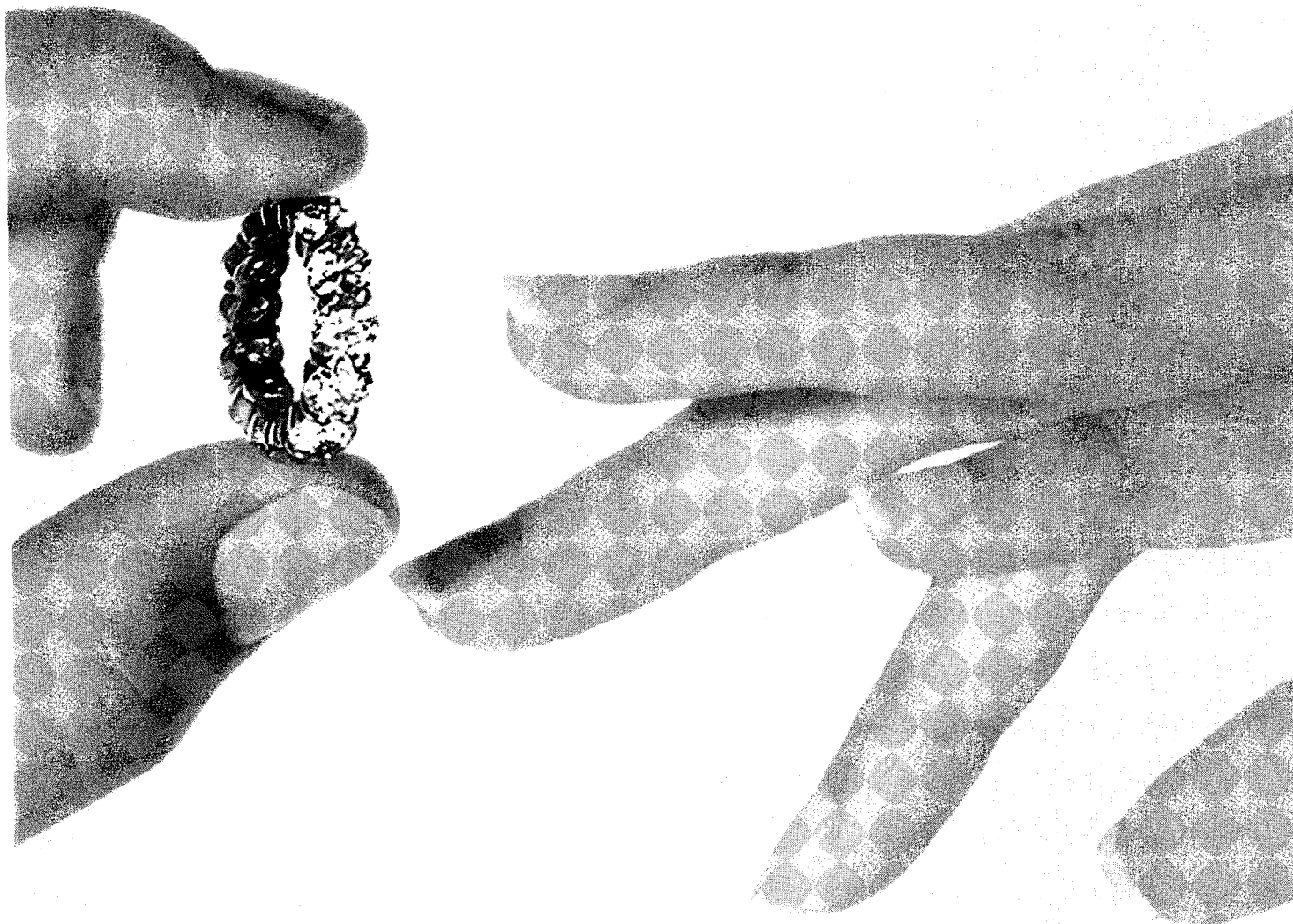
Bernard-Henri Lévy (July/August *Atlantic*) links Americans’ defense of the constitutional right to own and carry guns to Nazism, simply because he observed a few people selling Nazi artifacts at a Dallas gun show. I detect bias in this view.

As a longtime gun owner I have a pretty good handle on what motivates these people, and it isn’t Hitler. Most gun owners don’t own Nazi paraphernalia and are appalled by Nazism; they enjoy hunting and shooting, and understand that guns don’t cause crime but, rather, reduce crime rates.

*Joseph Spicatum
Missoula, Mont.*

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Boys Without Men

Caitlin Flanagan's review of my book *Raising Boys Without Men* ("Boys Will Be Boys," November *Atlantic*) says little, if anything, about my findings but speaks volumes about the widespread, fear-based ideology that stigmatizes single mothers and two-mother couples. Buried deep in her review is a grudging admission that single mothers throughout history have often raised their sons with great success. Otherwise Flanagan completely misses the point.

The experience of actual families clearly demonstrates that non-nuclear families are neither more nor less equipped to raise healthy sons. Parents who succeed do so because they are caring and supportive, spend time with their children, and nurture those children's independence. The mothers I studied have not "decided to stop cooking and let the kids nuke potpies for dinner." On the contrary, they spend more time with their children than heterosexual couples do, and are home for dinner more often.

That "masculinity arises naturally" is not my belief; it is a scientific finding that was as surprising to me, as a straight mother, as it is to Flanagan. Reality often has the power to surprise. What surprised me more was that Flanagan thinks I am afraid of straight men, because I have been married to one for many years and raised two strong, healthy children with him. If I thought boys raised without men were actually better off, I would have a lot of explaining to do to my twenty-six-year-old son. The real question is, Are the sons of single mothers and lesbian couples worse off (as so many people assume), or can these mothers succeed in raising strong, healthy, independent sons?

Ideology aside, the answer is a resounding yes. That's a good thing, because the proportion of American families headed by women has grown by 50 percent since 1980. At the same time, families headed by heterosexual couples now represent just 23 percent of all households, and that number is shrinking every year. We can argue about the reasons until the cows come home. But if we really care about chil-

dren, we will stop denying reality and judging their parents, and start supporting families of all kinds.

Peggy Drexler
Weill Medical College of Cornell
University
New York, N.Y.

As a single father raising two teenagers, I finished reading Caitlin Flanagan's review of Peggy Drexler's *Raising Boys Without Men* with a rousing *You go, girl!* that startled the dog out of his Sunday slumber.

Flanagan describes a very real perception that straight men either get in the way of or lack the critical attributes needed for successful parenting. Because of this perception, as she notes, both men and women flee from the hard work necessary to build loving and stable homes with shared responsibilities for parenting and homemaking. The consequences for our culture are enormous. The idea of mutual responsibility for our selves, relationships, and homes (and eventually our communities) falls away when the father walks out, or when the mother decides she doesn't want the hard work of a marriage and a relationship.

The burden of this cultural approach does fall primarily on women and children. Even with more women in the work force, more women with higher incomes, more women with stellar educational credentials and professional success, we've created a Boomer and post-Boomer culture in which women are still the go-to guys on all things family. As a straight guy who can cook, do the laundry, throw successful house parties, clean, garden, and arrange flowers and candles, I've lost count of the number of times I've been "helped" by, or received "suggestions" from, well-meaning mothers of all ages in the supermarket, Target, Pier I, and other stores, and I've lost count of the number of times I've seen mothers of all ages overwhelmed by crying children, overflowing grocery carts, ten-page to-do lists, or chaotic kitchens while the father just stands idly by looking lost and confused.

Successful child-rearing is a shared responsibility that involves both masculine and feminine elements expressed by both men and women. The sooner we

build a culture that recognizes that, the better off we'll all be.

Jack Harris
Edina, Minn.

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

Peggy Drexler's letter repeats, in microcosm, the fuzzy thinking at the heart of her book. Her argument: Traditional two-parent families are no better equipped to raise sons than are "non-nuclear families," and this is good news because there are more female-headed households than ever.

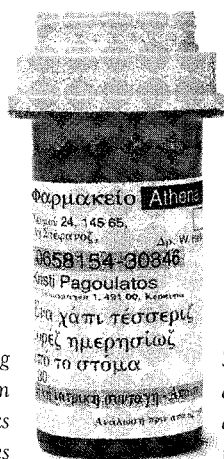
Now let's consider the facts: Fatherlessness is the single biggest crisis facing American boys. It is the No. 1 predictor of poverty, criminality, dropping out of school, and impregnating girls outside of marriage.

How do we reconcile her happy talk with my grim reality? By remembering that as a gender scholar, Drexler is pushing an agenda shaped by the concerns and lifestyle choices of upper-middle-class feminists, gays, and lesbians. Championing the parenting skills of affluent single mothers—a maternally capable, if statistically insignificant, cohort—is not indefensible. Suggesting that the success of these wealthy families means that fatherless boys across the nation are in good shape is reprehensible. Who is speaking for those boys whose lives have been made pitiful because of paternal abandonment and the breakdown of marriage—those boys who have no fathers to protect them, or to teach them how to be men? Not Peggy Drexler.

I would like readers to ponder the following fact: Peggy Drexler's "ground-breaking study," which was the subject of her dissertation and which brought her to her patently ridiculous conclusions about fatherhood, was based on her interviews with sixteen lesbian couples—all of whom lived in the San Francisco Bay area, and all of whom were wealthy. If a university physics department or a school of medicine were conducting research that way, we would all cry foul. Why aren't we questioning what's happening in America's gender-studies departments? I would strongly recommend that anyone who is considering donating money to his or her alma mater find out if the gift will help fund one of these intellectually bankrupt departments. Universities hate "restricted giving" because it holds them accountable for the way they spend our money. I think we should do exactly that.

Experts say 10% of the world's drug supply is counterfeit.

Can we be sure we import the 90% that isn't?



As you read this, Congress is considering legalizing the importation of drugs from more than 20 countries. But there are real risks involved. The World Health Organization estimates that 10% of the world's drug supply is counterfeit – 60% in some developing countries. Counterfeits can be dangerous – made and distributed by criminal organizations to resemble familiar drugs, and may have too much or too little medicine.

So what safeguards would we have? The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns that an avalanche of incoming drugs would overwhelm them. Since imported drugs, and potential counterfeits, would be mixed in with our domestic supply, neither you nor your pharmacist would necessarily know when you're buying imported drugs. We invite you to do your homework. Do the math. And see if drug importation adds up for you.

To learn more about drug importation, visit www.fda.gov/importeddrugs



GlaxoSmithKline

Source: U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing "Drug Importation." 108th Congress, 2nd Session, July 14, 2004. World Health Organization estimates, as reported in Interpol Media Release dated May 25, 2004, announcing the First Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting. May 25-26, 2004.

Safe Sex

Cristina Nehring ("Latex Conquers All," October *Atlantic*) describes a safe-sex technique outlined in the latest edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* as "a macabre combination of high-level surgery and elementary art class." Nehring seems to believe that using latex barriers during sex automatically removes passion and personal connection from the encounter.

As an HIV-prevention educator I was appalled to see this remark printed in your magazine. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 88,815 women were believed to be living with AIDS in 2003. Women are one of the fastest-growing populations affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, rising from eight percent of those affected in 1985 to 27 percent in 2003. Some are unaware of their partners' risk of infection, fear physical violence or abandonment during sexual negotiations, or have limited access to health care.

For Nehring to speak out against safe sex as "dull lies" is truly disheartening. Instead of attacking responsible behavior in an uncertain world, she could have better spent her time promoting a book that celebrates a woman's right to negotiate within a fair sexual arena, to advocate for herself, and to reduce her risk of contracting a life-changing disease.

James Murphy
Portsmouth, N.H.

Cristina Nehring replies:

I am not against safe sex—I am against the fetishization of safe sex. I am also of the opinion that when a caress has to be made through a dismembered dishwashing glove, as described in Our Bodies, Ourselves, it is better abandoned. Sex is a pleasure, not an obligation. It is one means of communicating with those to whom we are close; it is not the only means.

We live at a moment when many people feel as guilty for not having sex as their ancestors felt for having it. The bedroom has become a battlefield—a place we go to prove ourselves, a place we go (frequently in full combat gear) to demonstrate our fitness and liberation. Somewhere along the line love has gotten mixed up with war. It is this phenomenon (this sign of the times, if

you will) that I assail, Mr. Murphy. Not the little disk in your wallet.

Undeclared

Benjamin Schwarz made a small, understandable error in his review of *Pétain* (Editor's Choice, November *Atlantic*) when he claimed that no U.S. statesman has ever been forced to choose between surrender and total destruction. Although he is technically correct, he forgot to mention that in 1865 quite a few former Americans, most notably Robert E. Lee, did in fact face a similar dilemma, courtesy of your previous issue's cover boy.

Justin Palmer
Arlington, Va.

Benjamin Schwarz replies:

*Like Justin Palmer, I'm always sensitive to the fact that the Confederate States of America suffered defeat at the hands of those damn Yankees, and when I wrote the *Pétain* review, I was very much aware that the leaders of the CSA faced the dilemma I describe. That is why I deliberately used the term "U.S. statesman," not "American statesman." The Confederate States of America was a political entity separate from the United States of America—which, after all, was why the war was fought in the first place.*

Advice & Consent

I am an attorney representing Werner Erhard, and it has come to my client's attention that in "Lost in the Meritocracy," by Walter Kirn (January/February *Atlantic*), the author writes, "Working under a young crew boss who belonged to a self-improvement cult led by Werner Erhard, the founder of est..." While I am aware that much of Kirn's article was lighthearted and tongue-in-cheek, the implication that est was a cult is neither light nor humorous.

Werner Erhard has defended est and himself from such allegations on a number of legal fronts, with the help of testimony from numerous experts. For instance, Margaret Singer, the foremost authority on cults in the United States and the author of the book *Cults in Our Midst*, has testified under oath that est was not a cult.

Despite the fact that Erhard has never been the leader of a cult, articles like the one in your magazine perpetuate an "urban legend" that damages Erhard's reputation and character, and continues to cast him in a false light. Kirn's comments are hurtful, unfounded, and inaccurate. Even if made in jest, they are misleading and cause Erhard and est to be held up for ridicule and contempt. It is well known that a reference to something as a "cult," even if inaccurate, leaves a stigma that is hard to overcome. To make such an allegation unless one has solid proof is a serious error in judgment.

Terry M. Giles
Giles & O'Malley
Houston, Texas

Sandra Tsing Loh ("The Secret of the Old Saw," October *Atlantic*) has offered a convincing argument that the fictional sleuth Nancy Drew has two mommies. She might have added that Nancy Drew had a male parent as well. Three of the early Nancy Drew novels were written by Walter Karig, who ought to fit anyone's definition of a two-fisted he-man. Karig (1898–1956) was a U.S. Navy commander who reported directly to Dwight Eisenhower.

I read Tsing Loh's appraisal of the Stratemeyer Syndicate with great interest, because I, too, am one of the unsung and ill-paid authors who wrote pseudonymous novels under its auspices: in 1991, for Archway Books, I authored *The DNA Disaster*, a novel in Stratemeyer's ongoing series about the boy scientist Tom Swift. While writing this book I was approached to write a Nancy Drew novel, and the Stratemeyer Syndicate gave me a copy of its in-house "bible" listing the taboos that must never befall Nancy Drew and her fictional chums. The list is deeply intriguing. Apartheid was still going strong in 1991, and so was communism; Stratemeyer authors were specifically forbidden to write any adventures sending Nancy Drew to South Africa, but had no constraints against adventures set in Russia or China. If the plot of a novel requires that the villain render Nancy Drew unconscious, this may occur only by means of a blow to her head from behind; no chloroform, no needles. The villain is likewise permitted to imprison

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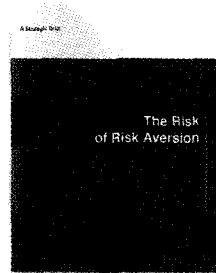
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*F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre
Minffordd, North Wales*

Mark Steyn ("Great Scott," October *Atlantic*) writes of a competition among Scottish towns to erect a plaque to commemorate the birth (in the twenty-third century) of the *Star Trek* character Mr. Scott. He says it would be "the first time a memorial has been put up in someone's birthplace 217 years before he was born."

Unfortunately for James Doohan, his *bête noire*, William Shatner, has beaten him to the punch. The town of Riverside, Iowa, has since the mid-1980s proclaimed itself the future birthplace of Captain Kirk. It has erected an *Enterprise*-shaped memorial, dubbed the USS *Riverside*. The town wanted to put up a bronze plaque of Kirk, but balked at the \$40,000 licensing fee Paramount wanted to charge. Coincidentally, Kirk will be born on Shatner's 302nd birthday—March 22, 2233.

According to MapQuest, the United States has ten towns named Vulcan, including two in Ohio. Which one will be the first future birthplace of an alien? It's the logical next step.

*Richard Feeley
Chester, N.Y.*

The Reverend Mtumiki Njira (Letters to the Editor, October *Atlantic*) makes the claim that traditional polygamy is superior to the "serial polygamy" supposedly practiced by men in the West, "in which each successive wife is cast out." On the contrary, the majority of divorces in the West are initiated by wives. Western women are in a position to cast out unsatisfactory husbands because they have education and financial independence. They do not need a man for survival, security, or social standing.

In his support of polygamy Njira ignores the issues of choice and equality. When women have genuine choice in the matter, they are highly unlikely to tolerate a polygamous husband. They don't have to.

*Joan Cross
Perth, Australia*

Once again Robert D. Kaplan offers an important analysis of the shortcomings of Pentagon transformation ("Imperial Grunts," October *Atlantic*). Kaplan's tour with Army Special Forces in the Philippines and Afghanistan demonstrates that the technologies that give our personnel "situational awareness" must not replace the training and education that give them "cultural awareness." In particular, Kaplan understands that language deficiencies undermine unconventional warfare and compromise intelligence. As one Marine recently told me in plainer terms, "After you kick the door in, you've got to know what to say." Sadly, we continue to give short shrift to language training and refuse to repeal the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy that removed capable linguists from the Defense Language Institute.

*Representative Steve Israel (D-N.Y.)
Washington, D.C.*

Alex Beam ("The Greatest Stories Never Told," November *Atlantic*) attributes the quote "Ladies and gentlemen, here they are!" to the sportswriter Curry Kirkpatrick's article on Morganna, the "kissing bandit." But decades earlier Jack Paar used the same line when he introduced Jayne Mansfield on *The Tonight Show*.

*Tom Noer
Kenosha, Wisc.*

Richard A. Clarke ("Things Left Undone," November *Atlantic*) believes the focus in homeland security should be not on chasing the terrorists but on creating large-scale federal programs to protect us from attack. Having had experience with such programs as a private-sector employee, I offer this response: George Bush's goal of establishing a democratic government under the rule of law, where people can develop economically and morally, has a better chance of protecting us from terrorists than the federal measures taken recently to protect us here.

Clarke quotes an analysis saying that security upgrades for 361 U.S. ports would cost as much as four days in Iraq. I used to work for a company that had commercial piers on the Great Lakes. As part of the Maritime Security Act,

the Coast Guard reviewed the status of one of these piers, located in a relatively undeveloped region, and concluded that it needed hundreds of thousands of dollars in enhancements. We had to put in electronic monitoring systems at our buildings and bring in security guards while vessels were docked. The Coast Guard also requested, backed by the force of law, that we put in substantial amounts of fencing, even though much of the dock was bordered by very dense, prickly vegetation that would have discouraged anyone from traversing it. (The rationale was that since we thought no one would go through it, we'd better put up a fence, because someone might try it for the element of surprise. It didn't occur to the Coast Guard that someone with motivation to walk through it would also have motivation to cut a fence.) Meanwhile, a short distance from the pier was a public boat launch, which had little security and easy access. Anyone with malicious intent could launch a boat full of explosives from this spot and go after our facility. The hundreds of thousands we spent under Coast Guard mandate did nothing to alleviate this risk.

*Michael Barron
Oak Park, Ill.*

I found it ironic that in the November issue Bernard-Henri Lévy argued that David Brock should be drummed out of journalism like Jayson Blair and Stephen Glass, but Thomas Mallon ("No Ordinary Tome") praised Doris Kearns Goodwin and her new book. In my view, Goodwin violated the fundamental standards of her profession, and should be treated at least as severely as Blair and Glass.

Even today Goodwin maintains what the writer Timothy Noah calls a "poor me" attitude about her plagiarism, and continues to insist that her "errors in transcription" were inadvertent. Oh, darn—somehow she accidentally omitted the quotation marks from multiple passages in multiple books. Such a claim is entirely preposterous, and only calls into question whether she actually wrote her own books.

*James D. Perry
Reston, Va.*



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COMMENT

Our Faith-Based Future

The White House remains unperturbed by the growing prospect of economic calamity

BY CLIVE CROOK

Once upon a time Democrats were big spenders and Republicans were fiscal conservatives. That was a while ago. Ronald Reagan's defense buildup and tax cuts caused deficits to soar in the 1980s, and it was Bill Clinton who brought the budget back into surplus in the 1990s, partly by curbing spending. But those fiscal role reversals were timid by today's standards. Since 2000 the Democratic Party has been left in the dust when it comes to spending.

The Republican Party is the new, undisputed champion of big government. The Bush administration has presided over an explosion of public borrowing, fueled partly by tax cuts but also by huge new outlays. Both sides of the public accounts were out of control even before the enormous increases in spending to cope with Hurricane Katrina and the persistently dire situation in Iraq (see "Disasters and the Deficit," next page). The administration's incompetent handling of the hurricane will exact its own price over and above disaster relief, as the White House tries to buy its way back up in the polls. The Republican Party's former reputation for prudent fiscal management is no longer merely compromised; it is ruined, perhaps for good.

Among Republicans in Congress squeaks of complaint are heard here and there. But the White House has drowned them out. Before Katrina, at any rate, the administration was still insisting that the budget deficit would fall over the next few years. That prediction might have been right if Katrina and Rita had not happened and if Iraq had come good—at least if one further assumed that no other emergencies would arise, that most of the administration's tax cuts would be reversed by the end of the decade (which the administration itself, of course, is determined to block), and that demographic pressures (which are causing the government to pile up vast liabilities for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid) would magically abate. On this side of the looking glass the deficit will not shrink unless something bold is done.

For those who find its budget forecasts unconvincing the White House has another line—one that slightly undercuts its assurances of fiscal responsibility. It is that the deficit does not matter. Economists have been predicting fiscal meltdown for years, officials point out. It has not happened and it won't, they say, even if the deficit sticks. The reason is that foreign investors just love this country's assets.

DISASTERS AND THE DEFICIT

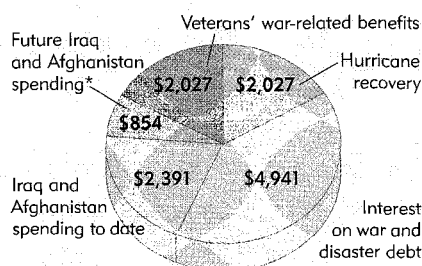
This year's hurricane disasters, coupled with extremely high military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, are likely to prolong and worsen U.S. budget deficits for the next twenty years. The bill for Katrina reconstruction will reach \$250 billion if legislation introduced by Louisiana's two senators is enacted. Expect it to go higher as we undertake the complex work of cleaning up environmental hazards, building new housing, rebuilding oil infrastructure, and repairing ports, bridges, tunnels, roads, and thousands of water and sewer systems. The actual costs of disasters have a way of creeping well beyond initial estimates.

That has certainly been the case in Iraq. So far the United States has spent \$275 billion on military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. But this is just the tip of a very large iceberg. The costs of continuing operations run at \$100 billion a year. When one adds in the long-term costs, including interest payments on war debt and disability benefits that we will owe to veterans for decades, the total cost of the war will exceed \$1.3 trillion.

With the federal government already running a deficit close to \$400 billion, we will be forced to borrow to pay most of these costs, saddling our economy with nearly \$1 trillion in extra debt, owed primarily to Asian central banks. Under conservative scenarios federal spending on Iraq and hurricane reconstruction would total more than \$12,000 per household; over twenty years interest payments alone will come to nearly \$5,000 per household. —LINDA BILMES

COST PER HOUSEHOLD

Total federal spending of \$12,240 per household on Afghanistan, Iraq War, and hurricane recovery over 20 years (2005 dollars)



*assumes full withdrawal from both countries within five years

Linda Bilmes, an assistant secretary at the Department of Commerce from 1999 to 2001, teaches budgeting and public finance at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

The resulting flow of funds—a global vote of confidence in American capitalism—means that the government can borrow without strain. Spend more, tax less, be happy.

It sounds like a confidence trick, and in the end it is—though, like all the best scams, it contains particles of truth. For much of the past decade private foreign investors have poured funds into the United States because they saw faster economic growth and better returns than were available elsewhere. As long as that kind of investment keeps flowing in, the deficit can be financed painlessly. Government spending still has to be paid for eventually, mind you—it is only a question of taxes today or taxes tomorrow. But a willing inflow of capital means that the eventual, inescapable cost to American taxpayers can be postponed at little risk.

Another thing helps. America enjoys the rare privilege of being able to borrow what it needs—currently on the order of \$782 billion a year—mostly in its own currency. Countries heavily in debt usually have to borrow in a foreign currency. If they later get into trouble and the foreign-exchange market drives their currency down, the burden of their debt, measured in local money, weighs heavier, pressing them into an even deeper hole. But if the United States got into that kind of fix and the dollar fell abruptly, the value of America's debt would not rise. Instead the countries that had lent the dollars would see the value of their investments (measured in yen, say, or euros) fall.

As far as the United States is concerned, this is an excellent arrangement. With foreign lenders choosing to carry more of the risk, a credit-hungry America can afford to be less cautious.

But not *this* much less. If America were borrowing at half the present rate, it could probably relax. But \$782 billion a year—more than six percent of GDP—is outlandish. Such reckless behavior has made America's privileged place in the world economy as much a curse as a blessing. Foreign capital is no longer voting as confidently for America. Private investors are spending less than before on American assets. Lately the slack has been taken up by foreign

governments and central banks, which are pursuing not profit but doubtful policy goals of their own. (China's holdings of dollar reserves are already far greater than makes sense for China.) At some point these lenders are going to curb investment in American assets. Should this happen suddenly, here are some of the likely consequences: a spike in interest rates as the government is forced to find new takers of its debt, at dearer terms; a surge in personal bankruptcies and a sharp curtailment of spending among America's heavily indebted households; a stock-market crash; an increase in inflation; and a slide back into recession.

The present course of fiscal policy is not certain to end badly, but the risks are increasing. This summer, before Katrina, the economist Brad DeLong put the chance of a major U.S. financial crisis at 20 percent. The former Fed chairman Paul Volcker puts it at 75 percent within the next few years if we don't change our policies. Stephen Roach, the chief economist at Morgan Stanley (and a notorious pessimist), thinks it's about 90 percent. Whether any of these predictions is close to the mark is anyone's guess, but that's not the point. The point is that the chance of a bad outcome is substantial—and much higher than it needs to be.

Changing course now—before circumstances leave no choice—would be hard even if the administration believed it had to act. Starting from here, the combination of higher taxes and lower public spending required to bring the deficit down to manageable levels is politically daunting. Yet at the same time, Katrina has perhaps created a political opportunity to undo some of the fiscal damage this administration has wrought—by, say, curbing tax cuts and scaling back the Medicare prescription-drug bill.

Unfortunately, big-government Republicans see no need for such measures; they look at deficit hawks and see Chicken Littles. But this fiscal environment is more dangerous than any other America has faced in its modern history. Without corrective action the sky may fall. ▀

Clive Crook is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.

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PHOTO OP

THE OTHER "EL NORTE"

This is not the U.S.-Mexican border. The ten-foot-high razor-wire double fence, soon to be twenty feet high, surrounds the Spanish enclave of Melilla, on the coast of Morocco—a major target of would-be illegal immigrants. (The man with the ladder is from Cameroon.) Because Melilla—like Ceuta, another enclave in Morocco—is Spanish territory, it offers potential access to the entire European Union (which subsidized construction of the fence). Thousands of Africans attempt to infiltrate the enclaves each year, and their numbers are growing. Some have been shot and killed while trying to enter.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGI CAMARA
WORLD PRESS NEWS

HYPOTHETICALS

If America Left Iraq

The case for cutting and running

BY NIR ROSEN

At some point—whether sooner or later—U.S. troops will leave Iraq. I have spent much of the occupation reporting from Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, Fallujah, and elsewhere in the country, and I can tell you that a growing majority of Iraqis would like it to be sooner. As the occupation wears on, more and more Iraqis chafe at its failure to provide stability or even electricity, and they have grown to hate the explosions, gunfire, and constant war, and also the daily annoyances: having to wait hours in traffic because the Americans have closed off half the city; having to sit in that traffic behind a U.S. military vehicle pointing its weapons at them; having to endure constant searches and arrests. Before the January 30 elections this year the Association of Muslim Scholars—Iraq's most important Sunni Arab body, and one closely tied to the indigenous majority of the insurgency—called for a commitment to a timely U.S. withdrawal as a condition for its participation in the vote. (In exchange the association promised to rein in the resistance.) It's not just Sunnis who have demanded a withdrawal: the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who is immensely popular among the young and the poor, has made a similar demand. So has the mainstream leader of the Shiites' Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, who made his first call for U.S. withdrawal as early as April 23, 2003.

If the people the U.S. military is ostensibly protecting want it to go, why do the soldiers stay? The most common answer is that it would be irresponsible for the United States to

depart before some measure of peace has been assured. The American presence, this argument goes, is the only thing keeping Iraq from an all-out civil war that could take millions of lives and would profoundly destabilize the region. But is that really the case? Let's consider the key questions surrounding the prospect of an imminent American withdrawal.



Would the withdrawal of U.S. troops ignite a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites?

No. That civil war is already under way—in large part *because* of the American presence. The longer the United States stays, the more it fuels Sunni hostility toward Shiite “collaborators.” Were America not in Iraq, Sunni leaders could negotiate and participate without fear that they themselves would be branded traitors and collaborators by their constituents. Sunni leaders have said this in official public statements;

leaders of the resistance have told me the same thing in private. The Iraqi government, which is currently dominated by Shiites, would lose its quivering stigma. Iraq's security forces, also primarily Shiite, would no longer be working on behalf of foreign infidels against fellow Iraqis, but would be able to function independently and recruit Sunnis to a truly national force. The mere announcement of an intended U.S. withdrawal would allow Sunnis to come to the table and participate in defining the new Iraq.

But if American troops aren't in Baghdad, what's to stop the Sunnis from launching an assault and seizing control of the city?

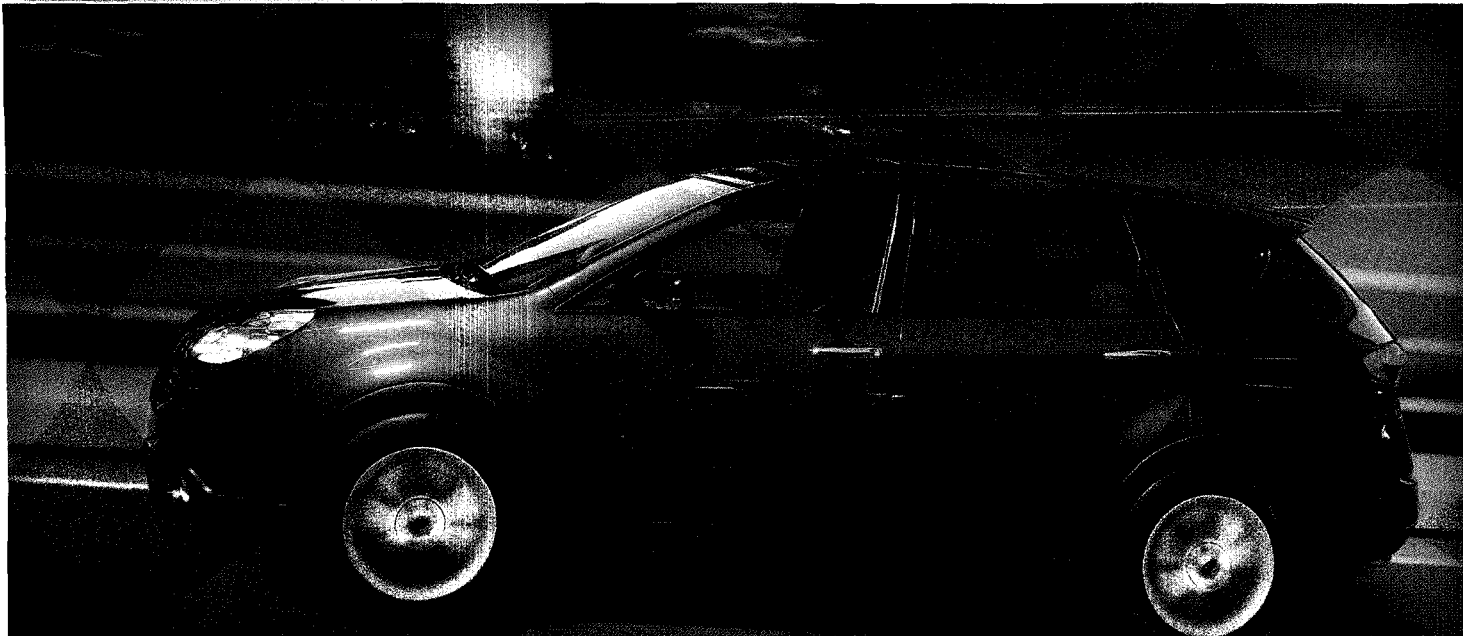
Sunni forces could not mount such an assault. The preponderance of power now lies with the majority Shiites and the Kurds, and the Sunnis know this. Sunni fighters wield only small arms and explosives, not Saddam's tanks and helicopters, and are very weak compared with the cohesive, better armed, and numerically superior Shiite and Kurdish militias. Most important, Iraqi nationalism—not intramural rivalry—is the chief motivator for both Shiites and Sunnis. Most insurgency groups view themselves as waging a *mugawama*—a resistance—rather than a *jihad*. This is evident in their names and in their propaganda. For instance, the units commanded by the Association of

Muslim Scholars are named after the 1920 revolt against the British. Others have names such as Iraqi Islamic Army and Flame of Iraq. They display the Iraqi flag rather than a flag of *jihad*. Insurgent attacks are meant primarily to punish those who have collaborated with the Americans and to deter future collaboration.

Wouldn't a U.S. withdrawal embolden the insurgency?

No. If the occupation were to end, so, too, would the insurgency. After

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all, what the resistance movement has been resisting is the occupation. Who would the insurgents fight if the enemy left? When I asked Sunni Arab fighters and the clerics who support them why they were fighting, they all gave me the same one-word answer: *intiqam*—revenge. Revenge for the destruction of their homes, for the shame they felt when Americans forced them to the ground and stepped on them, for the killing of their friends and relatives by U.S. soldiers either in combat or during raids.

But what about the foreign *jihadi* element of the resistance? Wouldn't it be empowered by a U.S. withdrawal?

The foreign *jihadi* element—commanded by the likes of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—is numerically insignificant; the bulk of the resistance has no connection to al-Qaeda or its offshoots. (Zarqawi and his followers have benefited greatly from U.S. propaganda blaming him for all attacks in Iraq, because he is now seen by Arabs around the world as more powerful than he is; we have been his best recruiting tool.) It is true that the Sunni resistance welcomed the foreign fighters (and to some extent still do), because they were far more willing to die than indigenous Iraqis were. But what Zarqawi wants fundamentally conflicts with what Iraqi Sunnis

heavily Shia Sadr City foreign *jihadis* had burning tires placed around their necks. The foreigners have not managed to establish themselves decisively in any large cities. Even at the height of their power in Fallujah they could control only one neighborhood, the Julian, and they were hated by the city's resistance council. Today foreign fighters hide in small villages and are used opportunistically by the nationalist resistance.

When the Americans depart and Sunnis join the Iraqi government, some of the foreign *jihadis* in Iraq may try to continue the struggle—but they will have committed enemies in both Baghdad and the Shiite south, and the entire Sunni triangle will be against them. They will have nowhere to hide. Nor can they merely take their battle to the West. The *jihadis* need a failed state like Iraq in which to operate. When they leave Iraq, they will be hounded by Arab and Western security agencies.

What about the Kurds? Won't they secede if the United States leaves?

Yes, but that's going to happen anyway. All Iraqi Kurds want an independent Kurdistan. They do not feel Iraqi. They've effectively had more than a decade of autonomy, thanks to the UN-imposed no-fly zone; they want nothing

to do with the chaos that is Iraq. Kurdish independence is inevitable—and positive. (Few peoples on earth deserve a state more than the Kurds.) For

the moment the Kurdish government in the north is officially participating in the federalist plan—but the Kurds are preparing for secession. They have their own troops, the *peshmerga*, thought to contain 50,000 to 100,000 fighters. They essentially control the oil city of Kirkuk. They also happen to be the most America-loving people I have ever met; their leaders openly seek to become, like Israel, a proxy for American interests. If what the United States wants is long-term bases in the region, the Kurds are its partners.

Would Turkey invade in response to a Kurdish secession?

For the moment Turkey is more concerned with EU membership than with Iraq's Kurds—who in any event have expressed no ambitions to expand into Turkey. Iraq's Kurds speak a dialect different from Turkey's, and, in fact, have a history of animosity toward Turkish Kurds. Besides, Turkey, as a member of NATO, would be reluctant to attack in defiance of the United States. Turkey would be satisfied with guarantees that it would have continued access to Kurdish oil and trade and that Iraqi Kurds would not incite rebellion in Turkey.

Would Iran effectively take over Iraq?

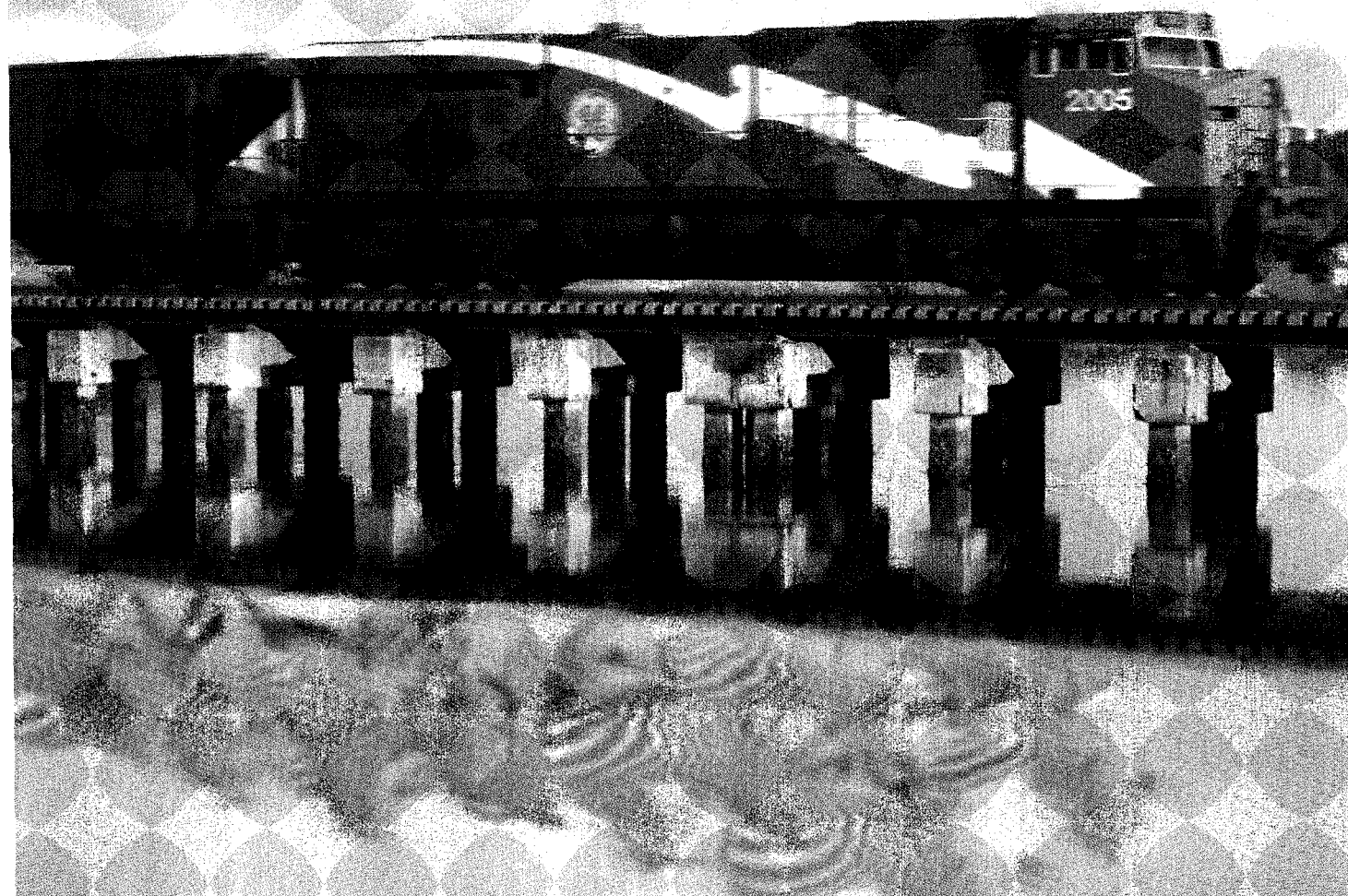
No. Iraqis are fiercely nationalist—even the country's Shiites resent Iranian meddling. (It is true that some Iraqi Shiites view Iran as an ally, because many of their leaders found safe haven there when exiled by Saddam—but thousands of other Iraqi Shiites experienced years of misery as prisoners of war in Iran.) Even in southeastern towns near the border I encountered only hostility toward Iran.

What about the goal of creating a secular democracy in Iraq that respects the rights of women and non-Muslims?

Give it up. It's not going to happen. Apart from the Kurds, who revel in their secularism, Iraqis overwhelmingly seek a Muslim state. Although Iraq may have been officially secular during the 1970s and 1980s, Saddam encouraged Islamism during the 1990s, and the difficulties of the past decades have strengthened the resurgence of Islam. In the absence of any other social institutions, the mosques and the clergy assumed the dominant role in Iraq following the invasion. Even Baathist resistance leaders told me they have returned to Islam to atone for their sins under Saddam. Most Shiites, too, follow one cleric or another. Ayatollah al-Sistani—supposedly a moderate—wants Islam to be the source of law. The invasion of Iraq has led to a theocracy, which can only grow more hostile to America as long as U.S. soldiers are present.

The American presence, the argument goes, is the only thing keeping Iraq from all-out civil war. But is that really the case?

want: Zarqawi seeks re-establishment of the Muslim caliphate and a Manichean confrontation with infidels around the world, to last until Judgment Day; the mainstream Iraqi resistance just wants the Americans out. If U.S. forces were to leave, the foreigners in Zarqawi's movement would find little support—and perhaps significant animosity—among Iraqi Sunnis, who want wealth and power, not *jihad* until death. They have already lost much of their support: many Iraqis have begun turning on them. In the



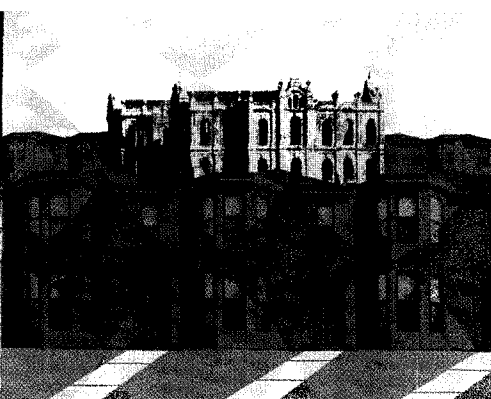
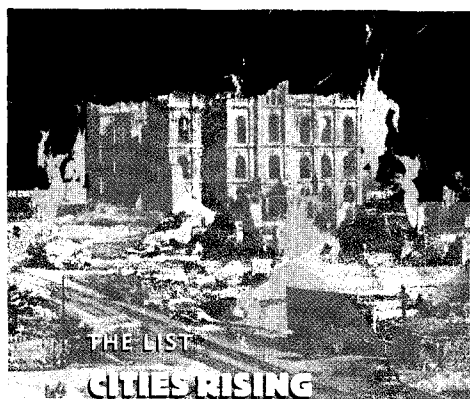
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The key questions in the reconstruction of New Orleans, which early estimates say may require ten years and more than \$200 billion, are already taking shape: Should the city give up on low-lying areas to better protect the high, or simply build more and higher levees? Because the destruction was concentrated in poor and black neighborhoods, will the new city be a smaller, gentrified, theme-park version of its former self? History shows that cities tend to recover fully, and with surprising speed—though the lessons of the disasters that crippled them are often quickly forgotten. Here are some disasters that have befallen modern cities, and the recoveries that followed. —MATTHEW QUIRK

1. Chicago fire, 1871. The fire destroyed 18,000 buildings and left nearly a third of the city's residents homeless—though only 300 died. Real-estate developers quickly seized on the fire as a great opportunity. Whole blocks stood clear and ready for redevelopment, and downtown land prices speedily rose above their pre-fire levels. The "Burnt District" was largely rebuilt in two years, with great zeal and little care—the *Chicago Tribune* warned that more would die in the reconstruction than in the fire itself. In a second round of rebuilding, in the 1880s, Chicago pioneered the vertical city of steel-framed skyscrapers.

2. Galveston storm, 1900. "The Wall Street of the Southwest," Galveston was once the center of America's cotton trade, but it sat on little more than a sandbar in the Gulf of Mexico, with no seawall to protect it. After a hurricane pushed a sixteen-foot storm surge over the nine-foot-high island, 6,000 to 8,000 of the city's 37,000 residents were left dead. Galveston recovered; over the next eleven years the city (including a 3,000-ton church) was raised by as much as seventeen feet and sheltered by a seawall. But Houston, spurred by the oil boom, soon surpassed it.

3. San Francisco earthquake and fire, 1906. An early-morning earthquake and a three-day blaze ruined about three quarters of the city, killed some 2,500, and left half the population homeless. The city was rebuilt within nine years at a cost of \$350 million—though few protective measures were taken against future fires or earthquakes. The Marina District was created by pushing rubble into the bay.

4. Leveling of Warsaw, World War II. Warsaw was well on its way to ruin by the time Adolf Hitler gave orders to destroy it completely after the 1944 uprising. Eighty percent of the city was left in rubble, and 800,000 of its 1.3 million residents were killed. But only four months after Warsaw's liberation its population was up to nearly 400,000, though the city still lacked even the most basic services. Within eleven years its population had returned to the pre-war level. The new, Soviet-backed regime eventually rebuilt a portion of the old city as a historical monument, but took some socialist liberties. Religious ornamentation was erased, and late-nineteenth-century buildings (which smacked of capitalist excess) were simply never rebuilt.

5. Tangshan earthquake, 1976. The cradle of Chinese industry (built over a fault line), Tangshan lost 97 percent of its residential buildings and 78 percent of its industrial plants. The official death toll in this city of one million people was 240,000, although some estimates are as high as 655,000. The quake remains the deadliest in urban history; the superstitious suspected that the dying Mao Zedong wanted to take the country with him. Outsiders said it would take twenty years to rebuild the city, but within a decade China had put the finishing touches on a more spacious (but drably uniform) city dominated by concrete apartment buildings.

Does Iraqi history offer any lessons?

The British occupation of Iraq, in the first half of the twentieth century, may be instructive. The British faced several uprisings and coups. The Iraqi government, then as now, was unable to suppress the rebels on its own and relied on the occupying military. In 1958, when the government the British helped install finally fell, those who had collaborated with them could find no popular support; some, including the former prime minister Nuri Said, were murdered and mutilated. Said had once been a respected figure, but he became tainted by his collaboration with the British. That year, when revolutionary officers overthrew the government, Said disguised himself as a woman and tried to escape. He was discovered, shot in the head, and buried. The next day a mob dug up his corpse and dragged it through the street—an act that would be repeated so often in Iraq that it earned its own word: *sahil*. With the British-sponsored government gone, both Sunni and Shiite Arabs embraced the Iraqi identity. The Kurds still resent the British perfidy that made them part of Iraq.

What can the United States do to repair Iraq?

There is no panacea. Iraq is a destroyed and fissiparous country. Iranians and Saudis I've spoken to worry that it might be impossible to keep Iraq from disintegrating. But they agree that the best hope of avoiding this scenario is if the United States leaves; perhaps then Iraqi nationalism will keep at least the Arabs united. The sooner America withdraws and allows Iraqis to assume control of their own country, the better the chances that Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari won't face *sahil*. It may be decades before Iraq recovers from the current maelstrom. By then its borders may be different, its vaunted secularism a distant relic. But a continued U.S. occupation can only get in the way. ■

Nir Rosen, a fellow at the New America Foundation, spent sixteen months reporting from Iraq after the American invasion. His book In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq will be published in February.

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Challenge Match

How the former world chess champion Garry Kasparov hopes to unseat President Vladimir Putin

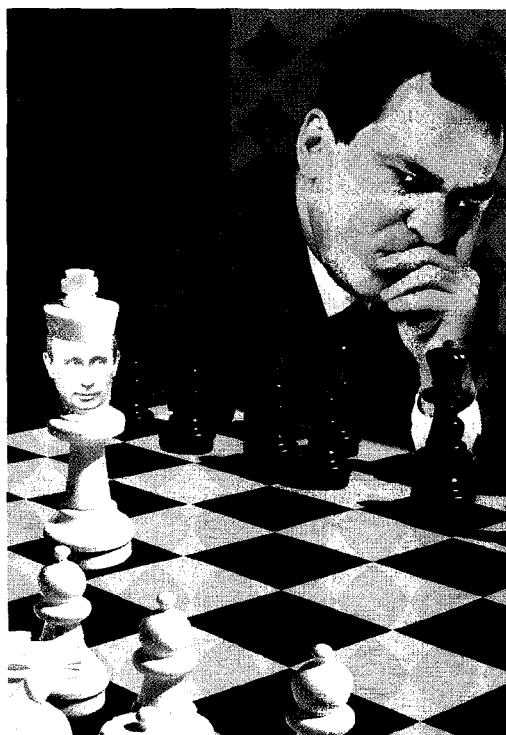
BY JEFFREY TAYLER

Politics in Russia has historically been a game of winner take all. Victors amass booty and virtual immunity from censure or even prosecution. The vanquished, if they are lucky, escape abroad or putter away their remaining years in dacha gardens. On the surface the contemporary situation is not much different: President Vladimir Putin, in power since 2000, has packed the State Duma and the Federation Council (Russia's bicameral legislature) with his supporters, and the national media are largely subservient to his wishes. During the first four years of his rule Putin's approval ratings never dropped below 70 percent, and in 2004 he won re-election with 71 percent of the vote. His closest competitor, the Communist candidate Nikolai Kharitonov, received only 14 percent and has drifted back into the muddy fields of his demographically doomed party. Now Moscow is awash in rumors that in 2008 Putin may seek election to a third term—a move currently prohibited by the constitution, but easily arranged.

All is not well for Putin, however. His approval ratings have swung wildly over the past twelve months, at times dropping by twenty points or more. Despite five years of draconian measures designed to suppress challenges to his authority, Putin looks increasingly vulnerable, especially since his botched attempt to rescue the schoolchildren taken hostage in Beslan in September of 2004 (which sparked angry protests in the North Caucasus, to say nothing of horror and dismay among his supporters elsewhere in the country) and his bungled economic reforms of last winter (which led to the first violent demonstrations of his tenure). If ever the opposition in Russia has had a chance, it is now; and the man most eager to seize the moment is a highly recognizable and

admired public figure in Russia, better known internationally for most of the past twenty years as the world's chess champion: Garry Kimovich Kasparov.

Russia is roughly as enamored of chess as the United States is of pro tennis. When Kasparov left the game to enter politics, in March of this year, the move sparked puzzlement among fans



and skepticism from political commentators, who stressed his inexperience and lack of status in the no-holds-barred arena of Russian politics. But the pundits' declarations notwithstanding, Kasparov is no novice in politics. He quit the Communist Party in 1990, when it became clear that the days of the Soviet system were numbered. He then went on to help found the Democratic Party of Russia and the pro-Western bloc Russia's Choice, now defunct but once the standard-bearers of liberalism. And in 1996 he campaigned actively for Boris Yeltsin's re-

election. These are passable bona fides for any Russian liberal.

Not surprisingly, Kasparov has given up on pursuing change through the system as restructured by Putin, and has instead embarked on a campaign to effect, in his own words, nothing less than the "dismantlement of the regime"—an undertaking that will surely demand as much determination, brashness, and brio as he displayed during his career in chess. He is a revolutionary, goaded into action by the Kremlin's authoritarianism and the impotence of the liberal opposition, and he has concluded that Russia's fate will be decided through something resembling the mass protests that recently

toppled corrupt governments in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. His aim is to unseat Putin through a sort of eclectic command center known as Committee 2008: Free Choice—a group made up of thirty-two members of various ideological persuasions, and affiliated with a broader outgrowth, the United Civic Front, which consists of about 2,000 liberals, Communists, members of extreme nationalist parties, and even defectors from the pro-Putin behemoth United Russia, scattered across twenty-one regions. What unites them all is the threat presented by the government's authoritarianism, and a determination to stop Putin from seeking a third term.

Early one clement morning in August, Kasparov took me along for a series of speaking engagements that Committee 2008 had arranged for him in Vladimir, a small city 120 miles north-east of the capital. He stepped out of the entryway of his apartment building, in central Moscow, trim and vigorous, his salt-and-pepper hair thick under a baseball cap, his swarthy complexion suggesting Jewish and Armenian descent—a strike against him on the pavement of a city where skinheads and other extremists frequently assault those who look "non-Russian."

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Kasparov's public-relations officer, a luminous young blonde named Marina Litvinovich, introduced us, and we climbed aboard a pearl-gray minibus. Several other members of his entourage hopped in as well. Bodyguards would trail us in a silver-hued SUV.

Our driver navigated among begrimed Ladas, Volgas, and Moskviches in a lurching cavalcade studied with clean new Mercedes and the occasional glistening black Volvo (perhaps belonging to a Duma deputy or other state official) forcing traffic aside with sirens and flickering high beams. Muscovites, many dressed to the nines, slipped between vehicles to cross the jammed streets. Soon we passed the Ring Road—Moscow's Beltway—and trundled into the countryside, where steel-and-glass buildings gave way to gritty cement hovels with hand-painted wooden signs. At the roadside scarved old ladies sold mud-covered produce or stood waiting for buses.

"Leaving Moscow is like entering another dimension," Kasparov said, his eyes on the montage of rural decay sliding by. "As things are now, Russian politics is conducted within the Ring Road.

Even liberal politicians don't travel much. They fear the people." Kasparov has no choice but to hit the road to deliver his message: state-friendly television gives scant airtime to opposition figures. But there is more to his travels than that, he said. "For me leaving the capital is like attending university. We'll visit some twenty regions by year's end, and I'm correcting our actions based on what I learn. I want to shift the center of political gravity from Moscow to the regions, to bring big politics down to the molecular level, to show people how it affects them, and how we can change policy to change our lives."

His peripatetics so far have proved neither smooth nor safe. In a throwback to hammer-and-sickle days, when the state found ingenious ways to harass lone but dogged dissidents like Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, the authorities now seem determined to discourage Kasparov. High-ranking police officers regularly await him at venues. Interior Ministry troops roughed him up at a rally this past May. When he visited the North Caucasus, in June, the trip devolved into quasi-farce: three airports denied his chartered plane

landing rights; auditoriums at which he was scheduled to speak inexplicably closed or lost their electricity; hotels at which he was booked turned suddenly "full"; rowdy teenagers hurled ketchup-covered eggs at him; and the police denied him access to Chechen refugee camps. Kasparov's worldwide fame probably dissuades his opponents from more-aggressive tactics; two other Putin challengers have fared worse. One of them, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the oligarch and chief of the oil company Yukos, sits in jail, ostensibly for tax evasion and fraud, but probably because he planned to finance the opposition. The other, the former prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov, voiced an interest in the presidency and soon found himself facing accusations of fraud and abuse of office, plus a tax audit.

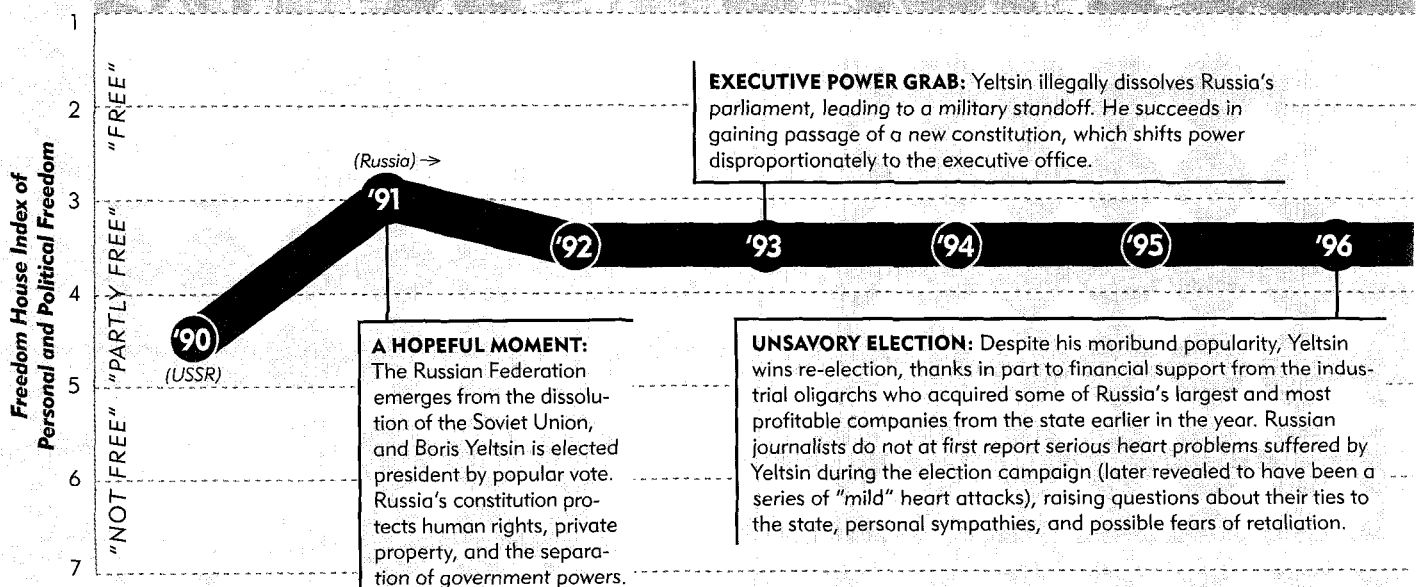
As we neared Vladimir, I asked Kasparov what motivated him to leave chess for politics, risky as it is, and when a majority of Russians appear so apolitical.

"I can't say I'm not afraid," he replied. "But the government is destroying our country. I feel a moral imperative to act—either to act or leave. And

CASE HISTORY

THE DISMANTLING OF RUSSIAN DEMOCRACY

The chart below shows the erosion of democracy in Russia. It is based on data provided by Freedom House, a human-rights group that rates political and personal freedom worldwide. In 2004, for the first time, Freedom House deemed Russia "not free," the group's lowest designation. Russia today is markedly less free than the Soviet Union was in 1990. —ABIGAIL CUTLER



I'm not leaving. Putin knows if *he* leaves the Kremlin, he'll be heading not to a retirement pension but to Lefortovo [Prison]. People are asking why, with state revenues at record highs from oil prices, they're living worse and worse." Notwithstanding an 85 percent rise in oil prices over the past twelve months, the growth in Russia's GDP—20 percent of which derives from oil and gas—is expected to drop from 7.1 percent last year to 5.9 percent this year. After six years of much-touted economic growth, wages average only \$200 to \$300 a month in Moscow—and the average is half that, or less, in the provinces. Kasparov noted that under Putin, as under Yeltsin, politicians and bureaucrats batten on the *kormushki* (feeding troughs) their offices provide them, extracting bribes, "gifts," and other lucrative benefits from their sinecures. According to the Moscow think tank INDEM, since 2001 the average bribe has jumped from \$10,200 to \$135,000—despite Putin's loudly publicized anti-corruption campaign. "All the bureaucrats must get their share," Kasparov told me. "They side with Putin as long as he gives them *kormushki*, but they will run out. When

that happens, and it's a matter of time, they will have less reason to support him. One can't rule out violence; there are too many hyenas to feed."

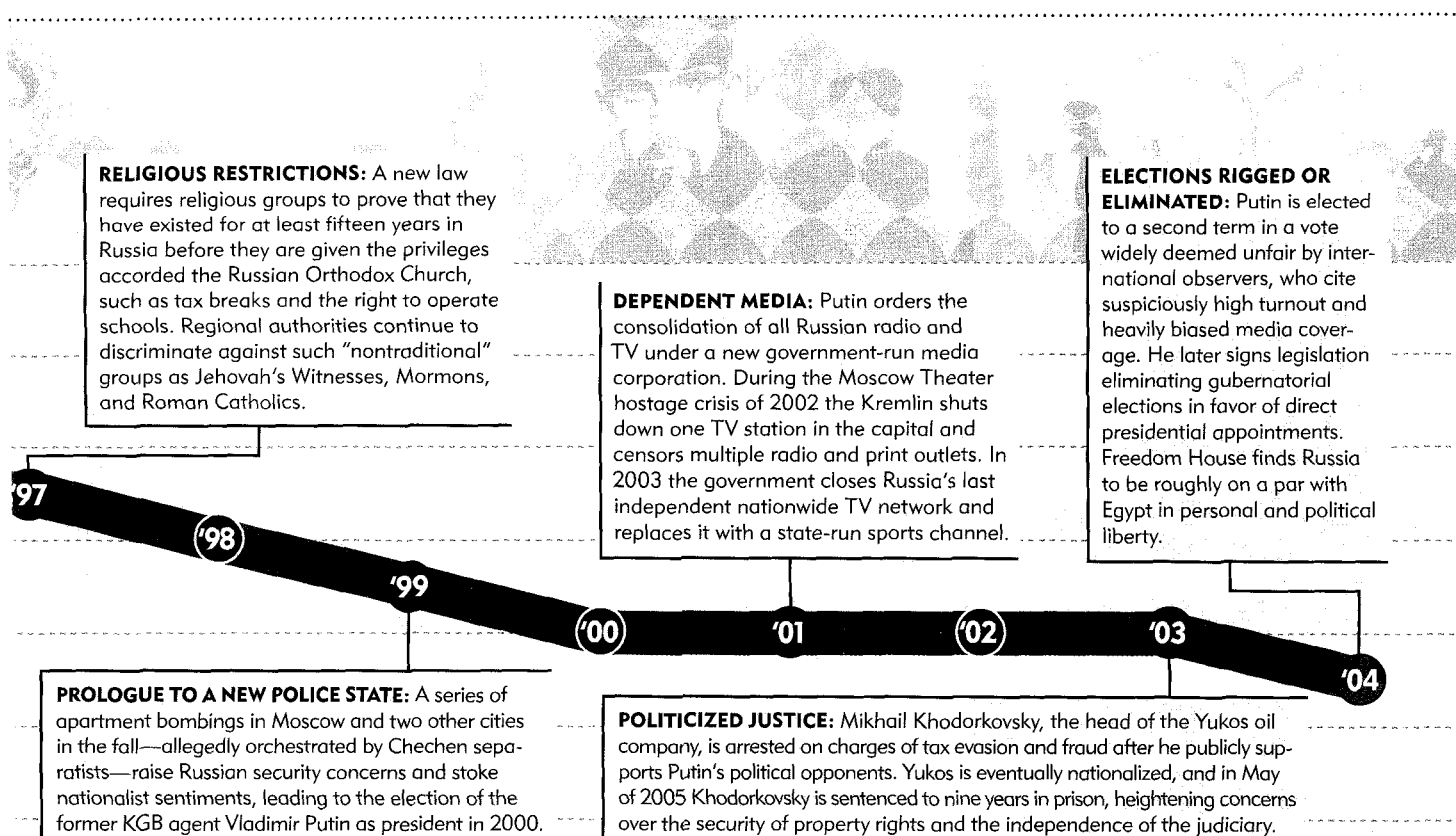
Three hours after setting out, we pulled into Vladimir's suburbs, a wasteland of concrete apartment blocks standing in shabby dominion over ragged fields. Near the dusty glass doors of the Palace of Young Creators—a cement edifice that blends the bleakest of Soviet and Bauhaus styles—a chunky middle-aged police officer stood glaring at us, his arms crossed. Two younger policemen loitered near the doors, looking bored. They made way for a crowd of forty or fifty of Kasparov's fans, led by the palace's director, emerging to greet their idol.

Kasparov took a seat on the stage of an auditorium that was almost full. He spoke matter-of-factly, as he had to me. Answering the first question, he dispelled a common misperception about his entry into politics: "I have no plans to run for office myself. My aim is to ensure that we have free and fair elections in 2008, and that the president of Russia has the mandate of the Russian people.

The government must know it can be *replaced*; only then will it be accountable to the people. Officials from the lowest to the highest must be elected." This was an oblique reference to Putin's decision last year to abolish gubernatorial elections and appoint governors himself, and to the rumors that he may soon do away with mayoral polls.

Questions on a variety of subjects followed in respectful volleys, but Kasparov stayed on message: Russians must embark on an open national discourse to determine their goals and how to attain them. Only then will development and prosperity ensue. "It's our country," he said, "and all of us must do what we can to help it." If this seems a statement of the obvious, one should remember that throughout history ordinary Russians have shunned politics as a rule, intervening only at cataclysmic junctures, and with mostly negative results.

After a fifteen-minute interview outside with Vladimir's TV 6, we bundled back aboard the minibus and took off for lunch and a press conference at the Staryi Gorod restaurant, in the town's center.



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All the seats were occupied. In attendance around a quadrangular arrangement of tables, along with disheveled local reporters, were saggy-jowled civic leaders and bureaucrats; a camera crew from RTR, Russia's state-television channel 2; and five hulking members of a pro-Kremlin youth group called Nashi ("Us"—as opposed to "Them"). Nashi's founder, Vasily Yakemenko, has pledged to use his members, who number around 150,000 and come from thirty regions, to help Putin combat, in unspecified ways, corrupt bureaucrats and oligarchs along with "liberals, fascists, pro-Western politicians, and ultranationalists." Yakemenko has designated Kasparov and Committee 2008 as enemies. Analysts and human-rights activists believe that the Kremlin may arrange to deploy Nashi against demonstrators in the event of widespread unrest in the run-up to elections. Kasparov agrees, calling them the "shock troops of the regime." Three sat directly facing him, and two were nearby on his left.

A middle-aged woman stood up and asked why Kasparov cites the dismantlement of the regime as his primary aim. Couldn't he offer a more positive goal?

Kasparov acknowledged that some of his supporters and colleagues had asked him to soften his message. "To that," Kasparov said, "I answered, Let's say the *overthrow* of the regime."

He smiled. Some in the crowd winced at his words; for understandable reasons, Russians as a rule distrust talk of revolution. But he didn't slow down. Reminding the audience that Putin had strangled the media and cut off channels of communication with the people, thereby consigning resistance to the streets, he hit his stride. "We must do everything so that money remains in the regions, where it is earned, to solve the *regions'* problems. Moscow is a giant vacuum cleaner sucking up the wealth of the regions and sending it abroad." Capital flight, around \$2 billion in 2003, hit \$7.9 billion in 2004 and is expected to reach \$10 billion this year. "Why, five years after the sinking of the *Kursk* submarine [and the loss of

the 118 sailors aboard it], do we *still* have no naval rescue service? Why is Russia selling nuclear technology to Iran when Iran sponsors Islamic terrorism—a grave threat to us? Why are we selling weapons to China and supporting the Chinese geopolitical agenda—the *gravest* threat to Russia, and a country with claims to our territory that it doesn't bother to hide? Our army has been reduced to *nothing*. Our cities are *collapsing* ..."

The Nashi youths stirred, crossing their arms and cocking their heads. Kasparov shifted gears and addressed them.

"I have one question for you," he said. "Why did President Putin award the highest medal of honor in Russia, the Order of Hero of Russia (the same order given to the defenders of Moscow against the German Nazis in World War II!), to Akhmad Kadyrov [the Chechen rebel leader, assassinated last year, whom Putin chose to administer Chechnya] and his son, Ramzan [his successor], bandits and murderers of our Russian soldiers? Tell me, why?"

The hall was silent. The Nashi members dropped their eyes to the floor.

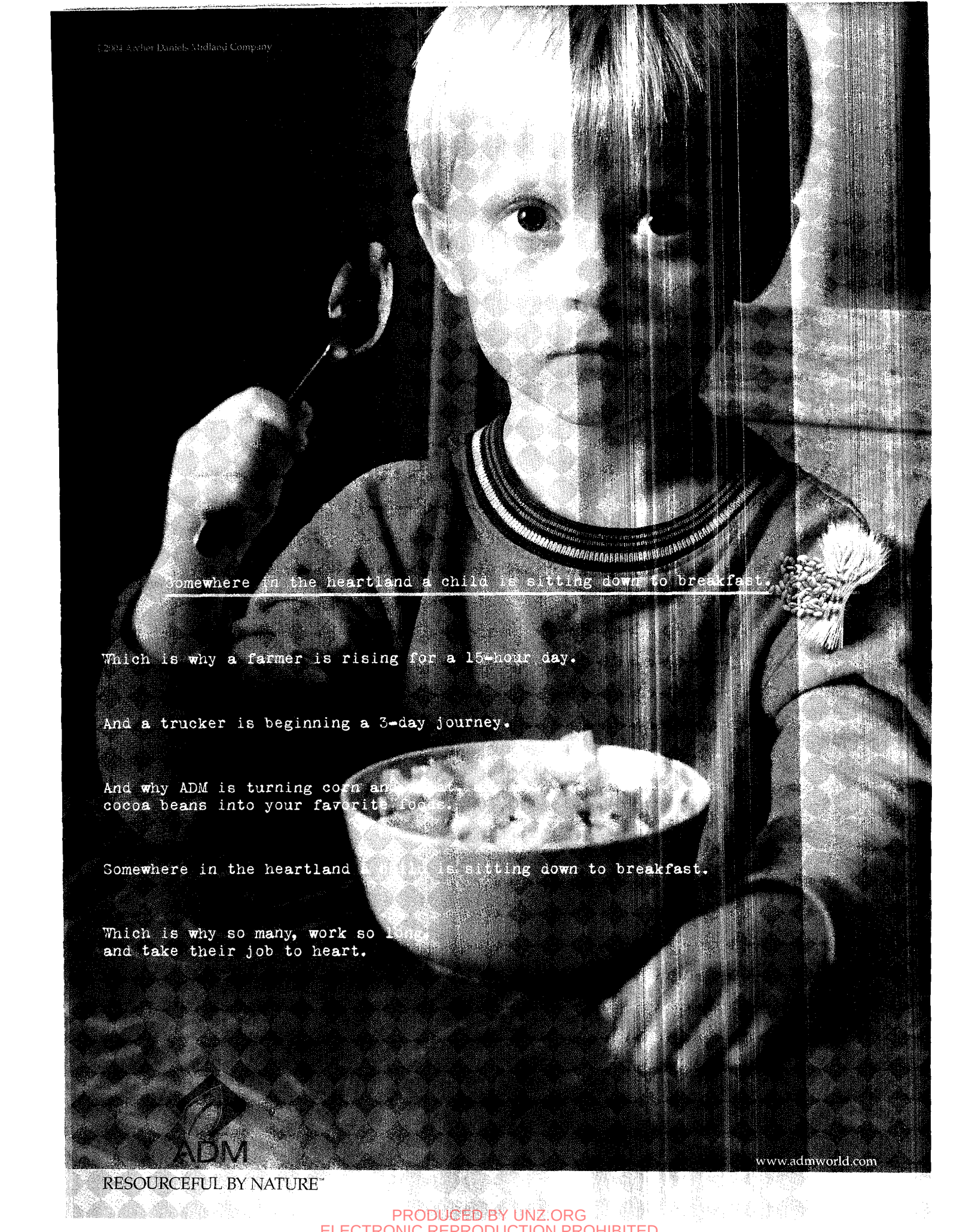
"Why? I ask you again, why did the president cheapen our award by giving it to the murderers of our soldiers, of guys your own age? Answer me!"

"We'll ask him when we see him," one grumbled, eyes downcast.

As we left the restaurant after the press conference, I wondered aloud to Kasparov about the wisdom of riling the masses. "To demand free elections but to fear the people at the same time is absurd," he answered. "Implementing the will of the majority, whatever it is, will offer us the best chance of success"—even if that means letting Russia break up.

In a country so vast and bristling with nuclear weapons, this would be a strikingly risky move, not only for Russia but for the world. But as a chess player Kasparov knows that risk means opportunity—and he has almost always outwitted his opponents. ■

Jeffrey Taylor is a correspondent for The Atlantic and the author of four books, including Angry Wind: Through Muslim Black Africa by Bus, Truck, Boat, and Camel.



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The Covert Option

Can sabotage and assassination stop Iran from going nuclear?

BY TERRENCE HENRY

In the debate over how to respond to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, much attention has been paid to the "Osirak option"—a reference to Israel's successful 1981 air strike on Iraq's Osirak reactor, which was then on the verge of producing plutonium for a nuclear weapon. Considerably less has been said about the seemingly star-crossed history of the reactor, and those involved with it, in the years before the bombing.

Iraq bought the cores for the Osirak reactor from France. Originally they were to be shipped to Iraq in April of 1979, but shortly before their departure an explosion ripped through the warehouse that held them. An organization calling itself the French Ecological Group, which had never been heard of before (and hasn't been heard from since), claimed responsibility. Shipment was delayed for six months while the cores were repaired.

The next year Yahya al-Meshad, an important scientist in Iraq's nuclear program, arrived in France to test fuel for the reactor. The morning he was to return home a maid entered his Paris hotel room and found that he had been stabbed and bludgeoned to death. (The only person known to have seen the scientist the previous night, a prostitute who called herself Marie Express, was killed a few weeks later in a hit-and-run accident. The culprit was never found.) Soon afterward workers at firms supplying parts for the reactor began to receive threatening letters from a mysterious group called the Committee to Safeguard the Islamic Revolution. Bombs went off at the offices of one of the firms, in Italy, and at the home of the company's director-general. Over the next several months two more Iraqi nuclear scientists died in separate poisoning incidents. It is

of course unlikely that these events were coincidental; most experts today believe that Mossad—Israel's secret service—was behind each of them, though it has never claimed responsibility.

It wouldn't be the first time Israel turned to sabotage or assassination to deter another country from obtaining nuclear weapons or the missiles to deliver them, and if the current standoff



with Iran persists, it may not be the last. When diplomatic efforts have begun to fail but an overt military strike is not yet politically or operationally feasible, covert action becomes attractive. Israel and perhaps the United States are likely to pursue it against the Iranian nuclear program over the next few years if current attempts to negotiate a solution with Iran fall apart.

How might such a campaign play out? Iran's nuclear program relies on foreign companies for many crucial parts, as Iraq's did. A natural first target for disruption would be supply lines for these parts. Indeed, Jon Wolfsthal, a fel-

low at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says that shipments of materials related to nuclear-weapons development have probably already "found their way to the bottom of the ocean." "Fires break out on board," Wolfsthal says. "Ships sink. If the U.S. or Israel came across intelligence that a ship registered in Singapore was going to deliver vacuum pumps [required for uranium enrichment] to a company in Dubai, those intelligence services would see to it that the boat didn't reach its destination." Supplies can also be rigged to damage the machinery in which they are installed, in transit or beforehand. Or working parts can be bugged to provide intelligence on where and how they are being used.

Even if Iran succeeds in acquiring all the supplies it needs (and it may be nearing that point), its nuclear program will remain vulnerable to sabotage. Producing fissile uranium is difficult and time-consuming, and the machinery required to do it is extremely sensitive. One step in the process is conversion, in which the uranium is blended with other chemicals and turned into a gas. In Iran this is reportedly taking place almost exclusively at the large Isfahan facility outside Tehran—a prime target for covert action. Theoretically, disabling the plant would not require especially clever tactics. (Summoning the political will and operational capacity for such

action is another matter.) According to Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA officer who worked on Iran, a heavy backpack filled with plastic explosives would be enough to severely damage or destroy it.

If the process of turning uranium into a gas were not disrupted, the uranium would still need to be enriched. Iran's enrichment facilities most likely use old technology (provided by Pakistan) that is notoriously temperamental. "In our industry," Wolfsthal says, "we call these 'self-disassembling' machines." Enrichment takes place in long cascades of centrifuges; powerful magnets hold each centrifuge in place while it spins at

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high speeds to separate the fissile uranium. The magnets are prone to mishap. “If the [electrical] current powering the magnets fluctuates,” Wolfsthal points out, “you can send the centrifuge flying out of its case, careening across the room like a bowling pin, and knocking out the rest of the centrifuge cascades.” Such a fluctuation could be set off in the part of the power grid supplying the plant. (Like many other countries, Iran has a grid known to be unreliable at times and vulnerable to attack.) Similarly, letting a small amount of air into the vacuum-sealed centrifuges could destroy many of them and set the enrichment program back years.

Building and operating Iran’s nuclear program also requires the expertise of scientists and technicians. Intimidating or assassinating key scientists has forestalled weapons development in other countries. In the late 1950s Egypt launched a ballistic-missile program with the help of German scientists, many of whom were former Nazis. In July of 1962 President Gamal Abdel Nasser unveiled two new test missiles at a military parade, bragging that they could hit targets “south of Beirut.” Mossad quickly responded with Operation Damocles, an intimidation campaign targeting the German scientists. One scientist was killed in September, two months after the parade, and in the following months the scientists’ families were threatened directly. In November several letter bombs addressed to the scientists were sent to the rocket facilities in Egypt; one of them killed five Egyptians. (This part of the campaign was rumored to have been called “post-mortem.”) Soon all the German scientists had left Egypt—and its missile program—behind. Without them the program withered.

Iran’s indigenous scientific capabilities today are much greater than Egypt’s were in the 1960s, so presumably it would be much harder to eliminate them—but perhaps not impossible. A recent report written by several former senior Israeli military and intelligence officials under the leadership of Dr. Louis Beres, an American professor of international relations and international law at Purdue, advises Prime Minister Sharon to adopt a “doctrine of

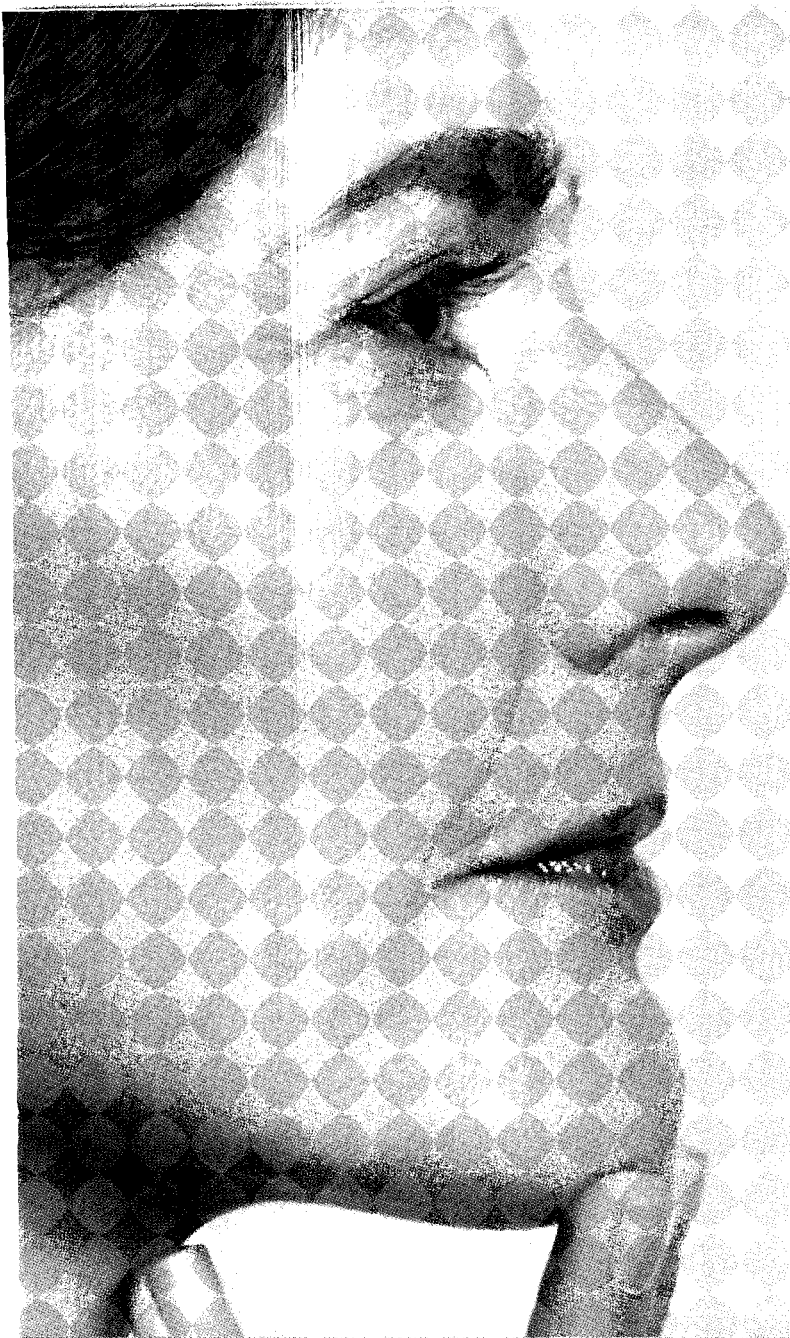
pre-emption” against Iran’s nuclear program, and provides a menu of covert and overt options for crippling it. Prominent among them is “decapitation”—a swift covert strike against either the “enemy leadership elites” or the program’s scientists and engineers. Several experts are skeptical that such a plan could succeed. But Beres believes that the logistical hurdles are surmountable. “The question,” he says, “is to what extent this would be regarded as barbarous, uncivilized, and destabilizing by the international community.”

Covert action alone is unlikely to solve the problem of Iranian nuclear ambitions. After all, the cloak-and-dagger efforts to sabotage the Osirak reactor bought only a couple of years’ delay before Israel launched a military strike. But some of Iran’s nuclear facilities (like Natanz) are not as close to being fully operational as Osirak was in 1981, and in some ways its program is more vulnerable. And permanent solutions look hard to come by today.

Meanwhile, both the United States and Israel are deeply concerned that Iran, with a nuclear shield to defend it, might seek to expand its influence as it did in the years immediately following the Islamic revolution, when it used groups like Hizbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to carry out large-scale terrorist attacks in the region. The Israelis worry that Iran would resume attacks against their country through these terrorist groups after a ten-year period of relative quiet.

Ashton Carter, a former assistant secretary of defense, says that he would be “surprised and disappointed” if a covert campaign wasn’t already under way. Conducted skillfully, Carter argues, such a campaign might not merely forestall Iranian progress toward a bomb; it might also sow doubt, causing Iranian officials to question whether their equipment actually worked and whether the people involved in the program could be trusted. By reducing the Iranians’ confidence in their ability to produce nuclear weapons, it might even prompt Iran to consider abandoning its nuclear program, in return for the carrots it has so far spurned at the negotiating table. ■

Terrence Henry is an Atlantic reporter-researcher.



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Primary Sources

Will Saudi Arabia's Shiites remain docile?; Europe's dim view (quelle surprise!) of the United States; new doctors as menaces; the fairer, cleaner sex

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Other Shiites

Even as America worries about Iraq's Shiite-Sunni divide, a similar fault line threatens Saudi Arabia, according to a new report from the International Crisis Group. The kingdom's two million Shiites account for only 10 to 15 percent of the population, but they are concentrated in the Eastern Province, which is close to Iraq and home to the country's largest oil fields and processing facilities. Saudi Arabia's Sunni monarchs have long pursued policies intended "simultaneously to pacify and marginalize" the Shiite population: encouraging Sunnis to resettle in the Eastern Province, seizing the property and merchandise of Shiite merchants, and imposing restrictions on Shiite religious observances. Shiite clerics have generally responded by urging distance from political matters and quiet, gradual attempts to bring about reform. The report notes, however, that a Saudi branch of Hizbollah was founded in 1987 and continues to operate, and that thirteen Saudi Shiites were indicted for their alleged role in the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers. It adds that many Saudi Sunnis think their Shiite countrymen are "biding their time, banking on external support—U.S. or other—to establish their own independent state." The risk of violent confrontation is currently low, the report con-

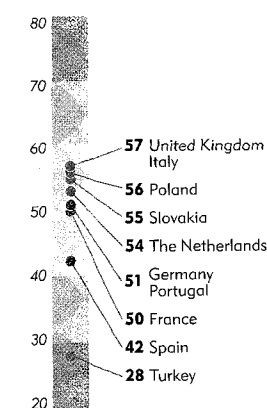
cludes, but this relative calm brings its own danger—that the Saudi government will feel little pressure to take actions that might pre-empt a more militant, destabilizing Shiism.

—"The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia," International Crisis Group

Transatlantic Fence-mending

Has the Bush administration made much headway in its second-term efforts to ease tensions between the United States and Europe? A new survey suggests that the answer is no. Of respondents in nine EU countries, 52 percent think U.S.-European relations have stayed the same since the president's re-election; 25 percent think they have worsened; and just 20 percent think they have improved. (Europeans appear to dislike the Bush administration in particular more than they do the idea of U.S. leadership in general.) There seems to be slightly more eagerness for rapprochement on this side of the Atlantic: 54 percent of Americans would like to see the country move closer to Europe in security and diplomacy, whereas roughly the same percentage of Europeans would like to see the EU become more independent of the United States.

EUROPEAN FEELINGS
toward the United States



When asked to rate their feelings toward America on a scale of one to 100, Europeans and citizens of Turkey (a country currently under consideration for EU membership) averaged a lukewarm 50; in contrast, Americans asked to rate their feelings toward European nations gave Germany, Spain, the UK, and Italy scores of 60 or higher, and granted even France a 53.

—"Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2005," German Marshall Fund et al.

GOVERNMENT

A Few Good Bureaucrats

It's pretty clearly not a good idea to recruit the former head of the International Arabian Horse Association to run the Federal Emergency Management Agency—but a new study suggests that the unfortunate case of Michael Brown represents just one extreme example of the problem with tapping outsiders to head government bureaus. Using the Bush administration's Pro-

gram Assessment Rating Tool, which grades federal programs on a scale of one to 100, a political scientist has found that agencies headed by career civil servants score five or six points higher, on average, than those run by political appointees (factors such as the size and complexity of the agencies were controlled for). He notes that although political appointees tend to have more education and more-varied management experience than bureau chiefs who come up through the ranks, longtime civil servants have experience within the agency they head and tend to remain in their posts longer than political appointees. In addition, political appointees are likely to have other appointees, rather than experienced civil servants, as their top advisers: 10 to 33 percent of executives in appointee-run agencies are appointees themselves, compared with just three percent in agencies run by career officials. Brown's FEMA, the study comments, had a particularly "appointee-laden" management structure.

—"Political Appointees, Bureau Chiefs, and Federal Management Performance," David E. Lewis, Princeton University

MEDICINE

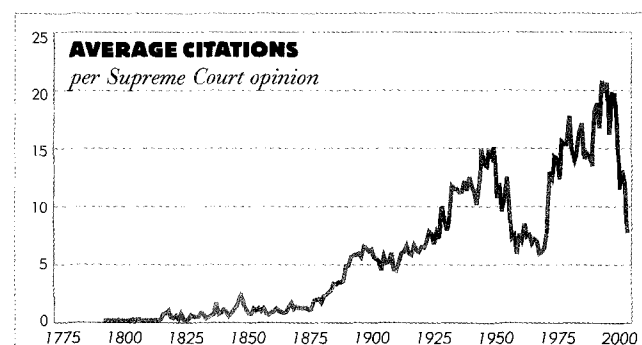
First Do No Harm

They may be learning to heal, but doctors in training are often a danger to their patients (among others), two new studies suggest. The first considers the "July phenomenon" in teaching hospitals—that is, the reduced performance associated with midsummer, when a cohort of new residents arrives. Using eight years' worth of data from a large sample of U.S. hospitals, the authors find that patients who check in

Unprecedented

This year's Supreme Court confirmation hearings included much talk about the importance of legal precedent—but recent Supreme Court opinions have cited fewer precedents than those written during the 1950s, according to a new study. Analyzing opinions written from the late eighteenth century to the present, two political scientists find that the average number of citations rose throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the principle of *stare decisis*, or letting previous decisions stand, became widely accepted and the number of cases available for citation increased. Under Chief Justice Earl Warren the trend reversed, with the average number of citations in an opinion plummeting from about fifteen in 1953 to about five in 1969—a phenomenon, the authors note, in keeping with the popular perception of the Warren Court as activist or even revolutionary. Over subsequent years, as the Court gradually became more conservative, the average number of citations per opinion rose; by the early 1990s it stood at just over twenty. By the end of that decade, however, it had begun to fall again (the study does not speculate as to why), and in 2000 it was down to about seven—not much more than during the Warren era.

—“The Authority of Supreme Court Precedent: A Network Analysis,” James H. Fowler and Sangick Jeon, University of California at Davis



during this turnover period, and are therefore treated by less-experienced residents, tend to have longer hospital stays—and, at the major teaching hospitals, higher mortality rates. (The only bright spot for patients who fall ill during this period is that these increased risks are not seen at hospitals that report high “teaching intensity.”) Residents, new or otherwise, can pose a risk even after hours. The second study, of thirty-four residents working in an academic medical center, found that at the close of a typically long (ninety-hour) week they were as impaired

as if they had drunk three vodka tonics in half an hour.

—“Cohort Turnover and Productivity: The July Phenomenon in Teaching Hospitals,” Robert S. Huckman and Jason R. Barro, National Bureau of Economic Research; “Neurobehavioral Performance of Residents After Heavy Night Call vs. After Alcohol Ingestion,” J. Todd Arnedt et al., *The Journal of the American Medical Association*

Operating Instructions

Survival rates among breast-cancer patients are the same whether the treatment is a lumpectomy followed by radiation or a full mastectomy, and current medical guidelines encourage doctors to promote the former, breast-conserving option—yet

mastectomies are still widespread. A new study suggests that this is not, as is commonly thought, the result of doctors’ “overtreatment and failure to involve women in treatment decisions” but just the opposite: patients are more likely to choose a mastectomy than their doctors are to recommend one. The study surveyed 1,844 breast-cancer patients in Los Angeles and Detroit, asking whether they had decided on their own what kind of surgery to have, made the decision jointly with their doctors, or let their doctors decide. Among the white women surveyed, 27 percent of those who had made their own decision chose a mastectomy, as did 17 percent of those whose doctors had helped them decide—but only 5.3 percent of the white women who’d entrusted the decision entirely to their doctors ended up with the more invasive procedure. (No variation was found among black patients.) The authors posit that patients choose mastectomy because the risk of recurrence (though not death) is greater with lumpectomy and because they want to avoid the effects of radiation.

—“Patient Involvement in Surgery Treatment Decisions for Breast Cancer,” Steven J. Katz et al., *Journal of Clinical Oncology*

SECURITY

Under Pressure

They’re not just for making soup anymore—pressure cookers are now weapons in the terrorist arsenal, a recent Department of Homeland Security bulletin warns. Ways to convert them into improvised bombs are “commonly taught in Afghan terrorist training camps”; in the past four years pressure-cooker bombs were used in four terrorist attacks or attempted attacks in India, Algeria, and

Nepal. The bulletin points out that “as a common cooking utensil, the pressure cooker is often overlooked” by police and customs officials, making it an ideal vehicle for explosives. Officials are advised to be suspicious in particular of “any pressure cooker weighing more than expected.”

—“Potential Terrorist Use of Pressure Cookers,” Department of Homeland Security

HYGIENE

One Hand Washes the Other—Sometimes

Women appear to pay more attention than men to cleanliness, according to a study of hand-washing in public restrooms—although both sexes like to think (or like others to think) that they are more hygienic than they actually are. Ninety percent of the women observed by researchers washed their hands after using the toilet, whereas only 75 percent of the men did. Overall, 83 percent of the people observed washed their hands—but when polled, 91 percent claimed they always wash up after using public facilities. The study was conducted at six locations in four U.S. cities—so if you were in the restroom at New York’s Grand Central Station or Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium and noticed someone making notations on a clipboard, this may be why. The best hand-washing habits were seen at Chicago’s aquarium; the worst were at Atlanta’s Turner Field during a Braves game.

—“Don’t Get Caught Dirty Handed,” Harris Interactive, American Society for Microbiology, Soap and Detergent Association

Compiled by Ross Douthat and Marshall Poe. For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200512/primarysources

WHY IRAQ HAS NO ARMY

An orderly exit from Iraq depends on the development of a viable Iraqi security force, but the Iraqis aren't even close. The Bush administration doesn't take the problem seriously—and it never has

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Photographs by Ilkka Uimonen

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When Saddam Hussein fell, the Iraqi people gained freedom. What they didn't get was public order. Looting began immediately, and by the time it abated, signs of an insurgency had appeared. Four months after the invasion the first bomb that killed more than one person went off; two years later, through this past summer, multiple-fatality bombings occurred on average once a day. The targets were not just U.S. troops but Iraqi civilians and, more important, Iraqis who would bring order to the country. The first major attack on Iraq's own policemen occurred in October of 2003, when a car bomb killed ten people at a Baghdad police station. This summer an average of ten Iraqi policemen or soldiers were killed each day. It is true, as U.S. officials often point out, that the violence is confined mainly to four of Iraq's eighteen provinces. But these four provinces contain the nation's capital and just under half its people.

The crucial need to improve security and order in Iraq puts the United States in an impossible position. It can't honorably leave Iraq—as opposed to simply evacuating Saigon-style—so long as its military must provide most of the manpower, weaponry, intelligence systems, and strategies being used against the insurgency. But it can't sensibly stay when the very presence of its troops is a worsening irritant to the Iraqi public and a rallying point for nationalist opponents—to say nothing of the growing pressure in the United States for withdrawal.

Therefore one question now trumps others in America's Iraq policy: whether the United States can foster the development of viable Iraqi security forces, both military and police units, to preserve order in a new Iraqi state.

The Bush administration's policy toward Iraq is based on the premise that this job can be done—and done soon enough to relieve the pressures created by the large-scale U.S. presence in Iraq. These include strains on the U.S. military from its long overseas assignments, mounting political resistance in America because of the cost and casualties of the war, and resentment in Iraq about the open-ended presence of foreign occupation

troops. This is why President Bush and other officials say so often, "As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." American maximalists who want to transform Iraq into a democracy, American minimalists who want chiefly to get U.S. troops out as soon as possible, and everyone in between share an interest in the successful creation of Iraq's own military.

If the United States can foster the development of a sufficiently stable political system in Iraq, and if it can help train, equip, and support military and police forces to defend that system, then American policy has a chance of succeeding. The United States can pull its own troops out of Iraq, knowing that it has left something sustainable behind. But if neither of those goals is realistic—if Iraqi politics remains chaotic and the Iraqi military remains overwhelmed by the insurgent threat—then the American strategy as a whole is doomed.

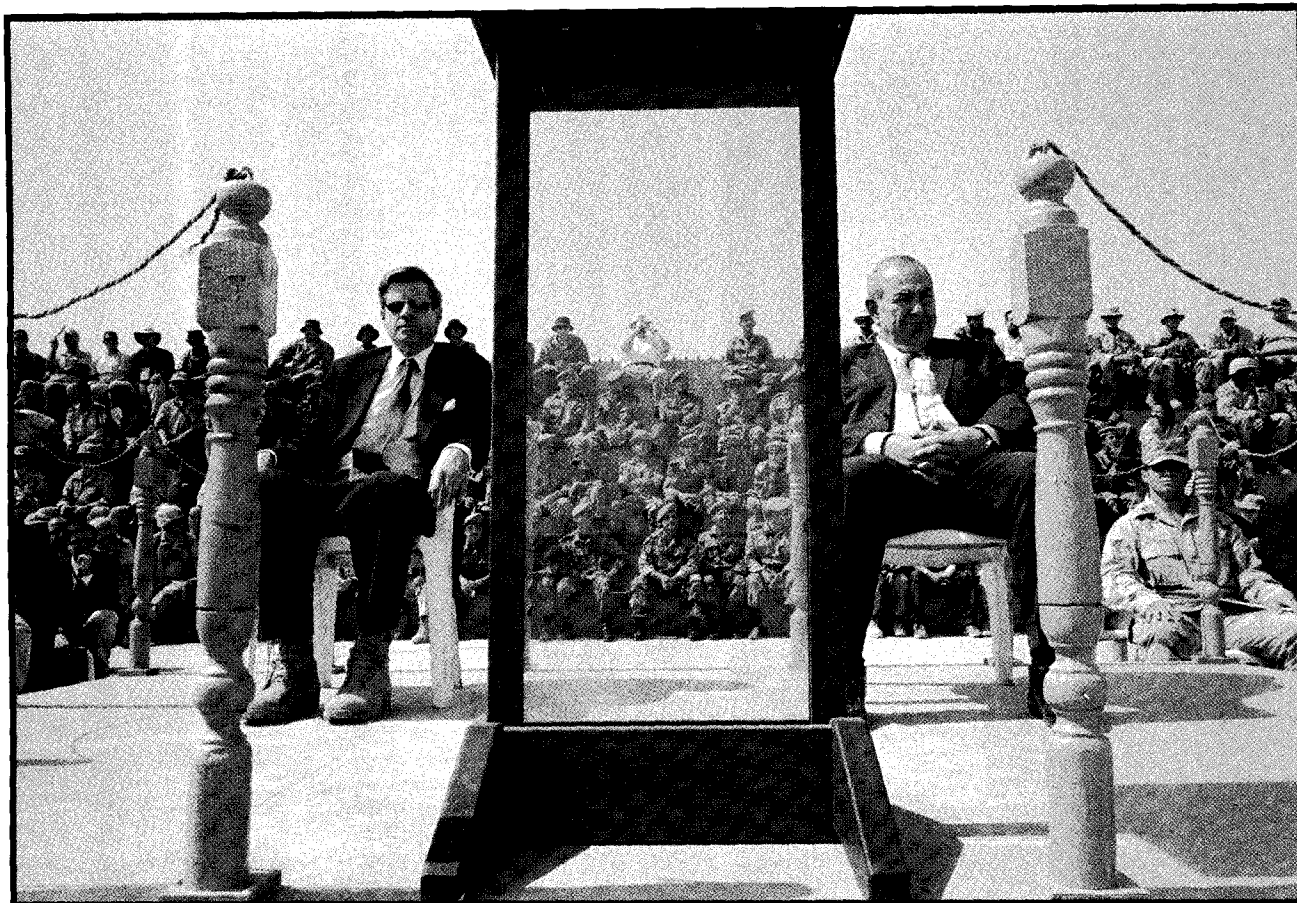
As Iraqi politicians struggle over terms of a new constitution, Americans need to understand the military half of the long-term U.S. strategy: when and whether Iraqi forces can "stand up."

Early in the occupation American officials acted as if the emergence of an Iraqi force would be a natural process. "In less than six months we have gone from zero Iraqis providing security to their country to close to a hundred thousand Iraqis," Donald Rumsfeld said in October of 2003. "Indeed, the progress has been so swift that ... it will not be long before [Iraqi security forces] will be the largest and outnumber the U.S. forces, and it shouldn't be too long thereafter that they will outnumber all coalition forces combined." By the end of this year the count of Iraqi security forces should indeed surpass the total of American, British, and other coalition troops in Iraq. Police officers, controlled by Iraq's Ministry of the Interior, should number some 145,000. An additional 85,000 members of Iraq's army, plus tiny contingents in its navy and air force, should be ready for duty, under the control of Iraq's Ministry of Defense. Since early

this year Iraqi units have fought more and more frequently alongside U.S. troops.

But most assessments from outside the admin-

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.



Paul Bremer, the U.S. overseer in Iraq, and Ayad Allawi, then president of the Iraqi Governing Council, at the graduation of 700 U.S.-trained Iraqi soldiers, Kirkush, October 2003

istration have been far more downbeat than Rumsfeld's. Time and again since the training effort began, inspection teams from Congress, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), think tanks, and the military itself have visited Iraq and come to the same conclusion: the readiness of many Iraqi units is low, their loyalty and morale are questionable, regional and ethnic divisions are sharp, their reported numbers overstate their real effectiveness.

The numbers are at best imperfect measures. Early this year the American-led training command shifted its emphasis from simple head counts of Iraqi troops to an assessment of unit readiness based on a four-part classification scheme. Level 1, the highest, was for "fully capable" units—those that could plan, execute, and maintain counterinsurgency operations with no help whatsoever. Last summer Pentagon officials said that three Iraqi units, out of a total of 115 police and army battalions, had reached this level. In September the U.S. military commander in Iraq, Army General George Casey, lowered that estimate to one.

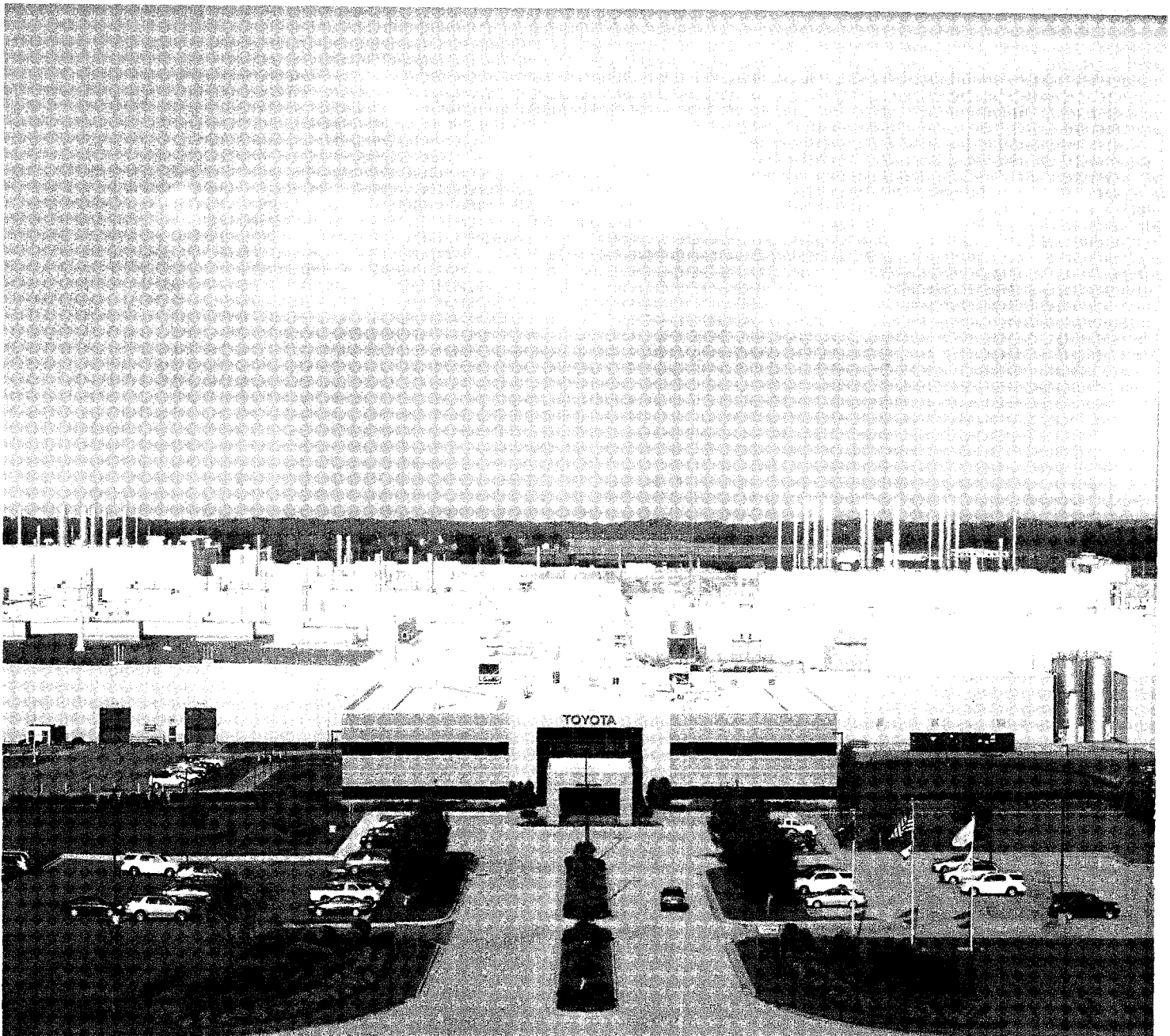
Level 2 was for "capable" units, which can fight against insurgents as long as the United States provides operational assistance (air support, logistics, communications, and so on). Marine General Peter Pace, who is now the

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last summer that just under one third of Iraqi army units had reached this level. A few more had by fall. Level 3, for "partially capable" units, included those that could provide extra manpower in efforts planned, led, supplied, and sustained by Americans. The remaining two thirds of Iraqi army units, and half the police, were in this category. Level 4, "incapable" units, were those that were of no help whatsoever in fighting the insurgency. Half of all police units were so classified.

In short, if American troops disappeared tomorrow, Iraq would have essentially no independent security force. Half its policemen would be considered worthless, and the other half would depend on external help for organization, direction, support. Two thirds of the army would be in the same dependent position, and even the better-prepared one third would suffer significant limitations without foreign help.

The moment when Iraqis can lift much of the burden from American troops is not yet in sight. Understanding whether this situation might improve requires understanding what the problems have been so far.

Over the summer and fall I asked a large number of people why Iraq in effect still had no army, and what, realistically, the United States could expect in the future. Most were Americans, but I also spoke with experts from Iraq, Britain, Israel, France, and other countries. Most had served in the military; a large number had recently



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been posted in Iraq, and a sizable contingent had fought in Vietnam. Almost all those still on active duty insisted that I not use their names. The Army's press office did arrange for me to speak with Lieutenant General Dave Petraeus, who was just completing his year's assignment as commander of the training effort in Iraq, before being replaced by Martin Dempsey, another three-star Army general. But it declined requests for interviews with Petraeus's predecessor, Major General Paul Eaton, or others who had been involved in training programs during the first months of the occupation, or with lower-ranking officers and enlisted men. Many of them wanted to talk or correspond anyway.

What I heard amounted to this: The United States has recently figured out a better approach to training Iraqi troops. Early this year it began putting more money, and more of its best people, on the job. As a result, more Iraqi units are operating effectively, and fewer are collapsing or deserting under pressure. In 2004, during major battles in Fallujah, Mosul, and elsewhere, large percentages of the Iraqi soldiers and policemen supposedly fighting alongside U.S. forces simply fled when the shooting began. But since the Iraqi elections last January "there has not been a single case of Iraqi security forces melting away or going out the back door of the police station," Petraeus told me. Iraqi recruits keep showing up at police and military enlistment stations, even as service in police and military units has become more dangerous.

But as the training and numbers are getting somewhat better, the problems created by the insurgency are getting worse—and getting worse faster than the Iraqi forces are improving. Measured against what it would take to leave Iraqis fully in charge of their own security, the United States and the Iraqi government are losing ground. Absent a dramatic change—in the insurgency, in American efforts, in resolving political differences in Iraq—America's options will grow worse, not better, as time goes on.

Here is a sampling of worried voices:

"The current situation will NEVER allow for an effective ISF [Iraqi Security Force] to be created," a young Marine officer who will not let me use his name wrote in an e-mail after he returned from Iraq this summer. "We simply do not have enough people to train forces. If we shift personnel from security duties to training, we release newly trained ISF into ever-worsening environs."

"A growing number of U.S. military officers in Iraq and those who have returned from the region are voicing concern that the nascent Iraqi army will fall apart if American forces are drawn down in the foreseeable future," Elaine Grossman, of the well-connected newsletter *Inside the Pentagon*, reported in September.

"U.S. trainers have made a heroic effort and have achieved some success with some units," Ahmed Hashim, of the Naval War College, told me in an e-mail. "But the Iraqi Security Forces are almost like a black hole. You put a lot in and little comes back out."

"I have to tell you that corruption is eating the guts of this counter-insurgency effort," a civilian wrote in an e-mail from Baghdad. Money meant to train new troops was leaking out to terrorists, he said. He empathized with "Iraqi officers here who see and yet are powerless to stop it because of the corrupt ministers and their aides."

"On the current course we will have two options," I was told by a Marine lieutenant colonel who had recently served in Iraq and who prefers to remain anonymous. "We can lose in Iraq and destroy our army, or we can just lose."

The officer went on to say that of course neither option was acceptable, which is why he thought it so urgent to change course. By "destroy our army" he meant that it would take years for the U.S. military to recover from the strain on manpower, equipment, and—most of all—morale that staying in Iraq would put on it. (Retired Army General Barry McCaffrey had this danger in mind when he told *Time* magazine last winter that "the Army's wheels are going to come off in the next twenty-four months" if it remained in Iraq.) "Losing" in Iraq would mean failing to overcome the violent insurgency. A continuing insurgency would, in the view of the officer I spoke with, sooner or later mean the country's fracture in a bloody civil war. That, in turn, would mean the emergence of a central "Sunni-stan" more actively hostile to the United States than Saddam Hussein's Iraq ever was, which could in the next decade be what the Taliban of Afghanistan was in the 1990s: a haven for al-Qaeda and related terrorists. "In Vietnam we just lost," the officer said. "This would be losing with consequences."

How the Iraq story turns out will not be known for years, but based on what is now knowable, the bleak prospect today is the culmination of a drama's first three acts. The first act involves neglect and delusion. Americans—and Iraqis—will spend years recovering from decisions made or avoided during the days before and after combat began, and through the first year of the occupation. The second act involves a tentative approach to a rapidly worsening challenge during the occupation's second year. We are now in the third act, in which Americans and Iraqis are correcting earlier mistakes but too slowly and too late.

As for the fourth act, it must resolve the tensions created in the previous three.

I. AUTUMN 2002–AUTUMN 2003: TAKEN BY SURPRISE

It was clear what might happen in a highly militarized society once the regime fell," Anthony Cordesman wrote recently. Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in Washington, has produced an authoritative series of reports of the new Iraqi military, available at the CSIS Web site. "The U.S. chose to largely ignore these indicators."

In explaining the early failures that plagued the occupation, Cordesman cited factors that have become familiar: an

unrealistic expectation of how long Iraqis would welcome a foreign force; a deliberate decision to hold down the size of the invading army; too little preparation for postwar complications; and so on. Before the invasion Saddam Hussein had employed at least half a million soldiers and policemen to keep the lid on Iraq. The United States went in with less than a third that many troops, and because virtually none of them spoke Arabic, they could rarely detect changes in the Iraqi mood or exert influence except by force.

But the explanation of early training problems also leads in some less familiar directions.

One view about why things went so wrong so fast is espoused by Ahmed Chalabi, onetime leader of the Iraqi National Congress, and American supporters of the war such as James Woolsey, a former CIA director, and Richard Perle, a former chairman of the Defense Policy Board. "My view is pretty straightforward," Woolsey told me. "We lost five years, thanks to the State Department and the CIA." The years in question were from 1998, when Congress passed and Bill Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act, advocating regime change in Iraq, to 2003, when U.S. troops moved on Baghdad. The act provided \$97 million for arms and for training expatriate Iraqi forces. "All we had to do was use some of that money to train mainly Kurdish and Shia units to fight with us, like the Free French in 1944," Woolsey said. The main counterargument is that a Kurdish-Shiite invading army would have made it even harder to deal with Sunnis after Saddam fell.

Having eliminated the existing security force, American officials wasted the next six months. By the time they thought seriously about reconstituting Iraq's military and police, the insurgency was under way.

A different view is strongly held by others among the war's early advocates within the Bush administration. In discussions with former members of the administration I was told they felt truly bad about only one intelligence failure. It did not concern WMD stockpiles in Iraq; the world's other intelligence agencies all made the same mistake, my informants said, and Saddam Hussein would have kept trying to build them anyway. What bothered them was that they did not grasp that he was planning all along to have his army melt away and re-emerge as a guerrilla force once the Americans took over. In this view the war against Saddam's "bitter enders" is still going on, and the new Iraqi forces are developing as fast or as slowly as anyone could expect.

But here is the view generally accepted in the military:

the war's planners, military and civilian, took the postwar transition too much for granted; then they made a grievous error in suddenly dismissing all members of the Iraqi army; and then they were too busy with other emergencies and routines to think seriously about the new Iraqi army.

"Should we have had training teams ready to go the day we crossed the border?" asks Lieutenant General Jim Mattis, who commanded the 1st Marine Division during the assault on Iraq (and whom Harrison Ford is scheduled to play in a film about the battle of Fallujah). "Of course! The military has one duty in a situation like this, and that is to provide security for the indigenous people. It's the wind-break behind which everything else can happen." Mattis argued before the war that teams of civic advisers should have been ready to flood in: mayors from North America and Europe to work with Iraqi mayors, police chiefs with police chiefs, all with the goal of preparing the locals to provide public order. "But we didn't do it, and the bottom line was the loss of security."

Many other people suggest many other sins of omission in preparations for the war. But at least one aspect of the transition was apparently given careful thought: how to handle the Iraqi military once it had surrendered or been defeated. Unfortunately, that careful thought was ignored or overruled.

After years of misuse under Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi military had severe problems, including bad morale, corrupt leadership, shoddy equipment, and a reputation for brutality. But the regular army numbered some 400,000 members, and if any of them could be put to use, there would be less work for Americans.

By late 2002, after Congress voted to authorize war if necessary, Jay Garner, a retired three-star Army general, was thinking about how he might use some of these soldiers if the war took place and he became the first viceroy of Iraq. Garner, who had supervised Kurdish areas after the Gulf War, argued for incorporating much of the military rank-and-file into America's occupation force. Stripping off the top leadership would be more complicated than with, say, the Japanese or German army after World War II, because Iraq's army had more than 10,000 generals. (The U.S. Army, with about the same number of troops, has around 300 generals.) But, I was told by a former senior official who was closely involved in making the plans, "the idea was that on balance it was much better to keep them in place and try to put them to work, public works-style, on reconstruction, than not to." He continued, "The advantages of using them were: They had organization. They had equipment, especially organic transport [jeeps, trucks], which let them get themselves from place to place. They had a structure. But it was a narrow call, because of all the disadvantages."

Garner intended to put this plan into action when he arrived in Baghdad, in April of 2003. He told me recently



Former Iraqi soldiers gather to demonstrate after learning that they would be unable to collect their pay, Baghdad, October 2003

that there were few signs of the previous army when he first arrived. "But we sent out feelers, and by the first week in May we were getting a lot of responses back. We had a couple of Iraqi officers come to me and say, 'We could bring this division back, that division.' We began to have dialogues and negotiations."

Then, on May 23, came a decision that is likely to be debated for years: Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2, to disband the Iraqi military and simply send its members home without pay.

"I always begin with the proposition that this argument is entirely irrelevant," Walter Slocombe, the man usually given credit or blame for initiating the decision, told me in the summer. During the Clinton administration Slocombe was undersecretary for policy at the Pentagon, the job later made famous by Douglas Feith. A month after the fall of Baghdad, Slocombe went to the Green Zone as a security adviser to Paul Bremer, who had just replaced Garner as the ranking American civilian.

On arrival Slocombe advocated that the Coalition Provisional Authority, or CPA, should face the reality that the previous Iraqi army had disappeared. "There was no intact Iraqi force to 'disband,'" Slocombe said. "There was no practical way to reconstitute an Iraqi force based on the old

army any more rapidly than has happened. The facilities were just destroyed, and the conscripts were gone and not coming back." The Bush administration officials who had previously instructed Garner to reconstitute the military endorsed Slocombe's view: the negative aspects of consorting with a corrupt, brutal force were still there, and the positives seemed to be gone. "All the advantages they had ran away with the soldiers," the senior official involved in the plans said. "The organization, the discipline, the organic transport. The facts had changed."

The arguments about the decision are bitter, and they turn on two points: whether the Iraqi army had in fact irreversibly "disbanded itself," as Slocombe contends, and whether the American authorities could have found some way to avoid turning the hundreds of thousands of discharged soldiers into an armed and resentful opposition group. "I don't buy the argument that there was no army to cashier," says Barak Salmoni, of the Marine Corps Training and Education Command. "It may have not been showing up to work, but I can assure you that they would have if there had been dollars on the table. And even if the Iraqi army did disband, we didn't have to alienate them"—mainly by stopping their pay. Several weeks later the Americans announced that they would resume some army stipends, but by then the damage had been done.

Garner was taken by surprise by the decision, and has made it clear that he considers it a mistake. I asked him

about the frequently voiced argument that there was no place to house the army because the barracks had been wrecked. "We could have put people in hangars," he said. "That is where *our* troops were."

The most damaging criticism of the way the decision was made comes from Paul Hughes, who was then an Army colonel on Garner's staff. "Neither Jay Garner nor I had been asked about the wisdom of this decree," Hughes recalls. He was the only person from Garner's administration then talking with Iraqi military representatives about the terms of their re-engagement. On the eve of the order to disband, he says, more than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers had submitted forms to receive a one-time \$20 emergency payment, from funds seized from Saddam's personal accounts, which they would show up to collect.

By early 2004 the administration had decided to spend more money on Iraqi troop training and make it an explicit part of the U.S. mission. It was then that a grim reality hit: how hard this process would actually be.

"My effort was not intended to re-activate the Iraqi military," Hughes says. "Whenever the Iraqi officers asked if they could re-form their units, I was quite direct with them that if they did, they would be attacked and destroyed. What we wanted to do was arrange the process by which these hundred thousand soldiers would register with [the occupation authorities], tell us what they knew, draw their pay, and then report to selected sites. CPA Order Number Two simply stopped any effort to move forward, as if the Iraqi military had ceased to exist. [Walt Slocombe's] statement about the twenty dollars still sticks in my brain: 'We don't pay armies we defeated.' My Iraqi friends tell me that this decision was what really spurred the nationalists to join the infant insurgency. We had advertised ourselves as liberators and turned on these people without so much as a second thought."

The argument will go on. But about what happened next there is little dispute. Having eliminated the main existing security force, and having arrived with fewer troops than past experience in the Balkans, Germany, and Japan would suggest for so large a territory, American officials essentially wasted the next six months. By the time they thought seriously about reconstituting Iraq's military and police forces, the insurgency was under way and the challenge of pacifying Iraq had magnified.

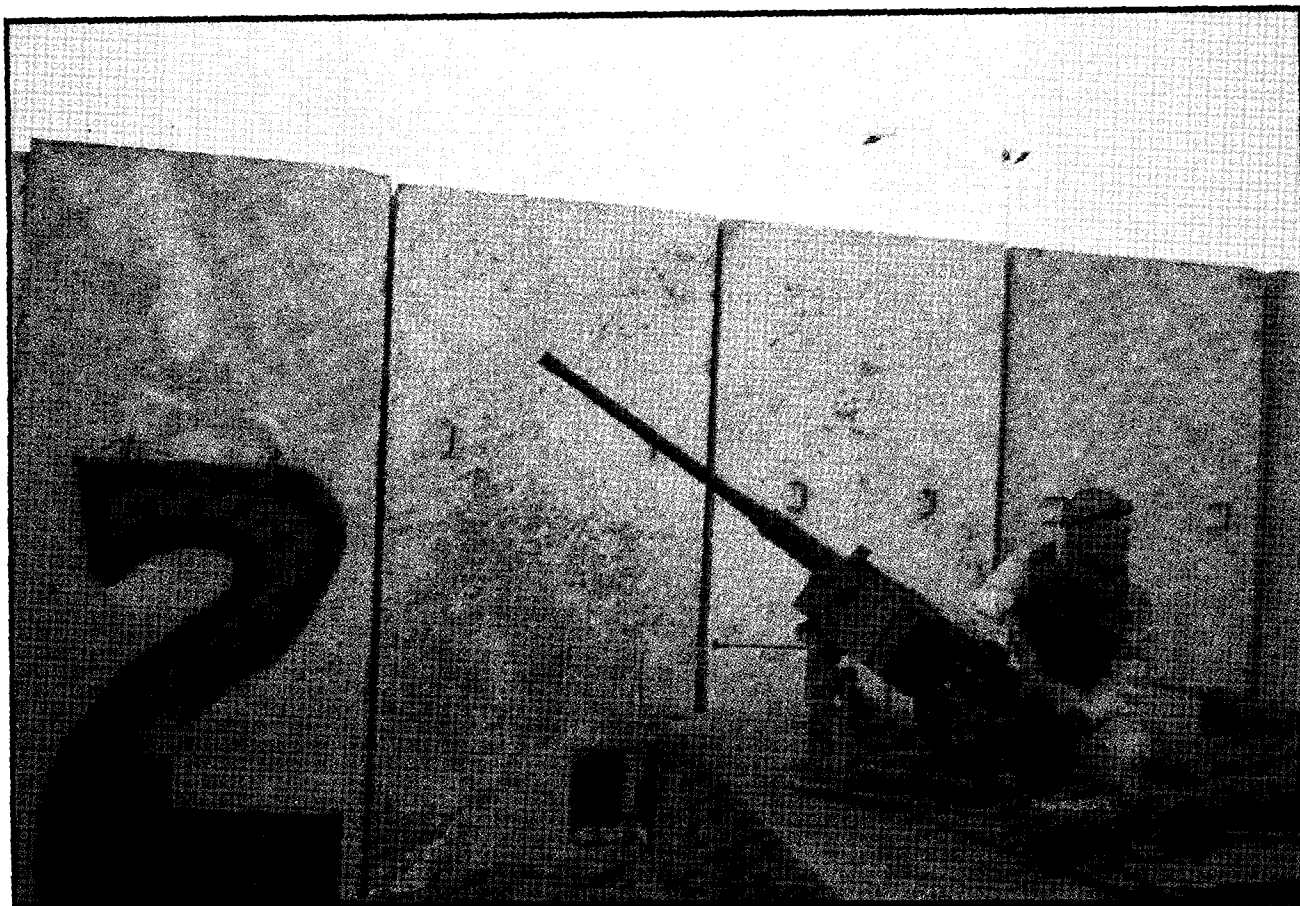
There is no single comprehensive explanation for what

went wrong. After the tension leading up to the war and the brilliant, brief victory, political and even military leaders seemed to lose interest, or at least intensity. "Once Baghdad was taken, Tommy Franks checked out," Victor O'Reilly, who has written extensively about the U.S. military, told me. "He seemed to be thinking mainly about his book." Several people I spoke with volunteered this view of Franks, who was the CENTCOM commander during the war. (Franks did not respond to interview requests, including those sent through his commercially minded Web site, TommyFranks.com.) In retrospect the looting was the most significant act of the first six months after the war. It degraded daily life, especially in Baghdad, and it made the task of restoring order all the more difficult for the U.S. or Iraqi forces that would eventually undertake it. But at the time neither political nor military leaders treated it as urgent. Weeks went by before U.S. troops effectively intervened.

In June of 2003, as the looting was dying down but the first signs of insurgent violence were appearing, the CSIS sent a team of experts who had worked in past occupations. They were alarmed by what they saw. "There is a general sense of steady deterioration in the security situation, in Baghdad, Mosul, and elsewhere," they reported. "Virtually every Iraqi and most CPA and coalition military officials as well as most contractors we spoke to cited the lack of public safety as their number one concern." At that time, the team pointed out, some 5,000 U.S. troops were tied down guarding buildings in Baghdad, with two and a half battalions, representing well over a thousand troops, guarding the American headquarters alone.

Anthony Cordesman, of the CSIS, says there was never a conscious decision to delay or ignore training, but at any given moment in the occupation's first months some other goal always seemed more urgent or more interesting. Through the first six months of the occupation capturing Saddam Hussein seemed to be the most important step toward ending the resistance. His two sons were killed in July; he himself was captured in December; and the insurgency only grew. Along the way the manhunt relied on detention, interrogation, and break-down-doors-at-night techniques that hastened resentment of the U.S. presence. "The search for Saddam colored everything," Victor O'Reilly told me. "It is my belief that the insurgency was substantially created by the tactics used by the occupying force, who were initially the saviors, in their search for Saddam. Ambitious generals, who should have known better, created a very aggressive do-what-is-necessary culture. Frustrated troops, with no familiarity with the language or culture, naturally make mistakes. And in a tribal society if you shoot one person it spreads right through the system."

The hunt for WMD troves, conducted in the same way as the search for Saddam and by troops with the same inability to understand what was being said around them, had a similar embittering effect. The junior-level soldiers and



A U.S. soldier inside the walls of the Green Zone, the Coalition Provisional Authority compound in central Baghdad

Marines I interviewed consistently emphasized how debilitating the language barrier was. Having too few interpreters, they were left to communicate their instructions with gestures and sign language. The result was that American troops were blind and deaf to much of what was going on around them, and the Iraqis were often terrified.

General Mattis had stressed to his troops the importance of not frightening civilians, so as not to turn those civilians into enemies. He, too, emphasizes the distractions in the first year that diminished the attention paid to building an Iraqi security force. “There was always something,” he told me. “Instead of focusing on security, we were trying to get oil pipelines patched, electrical grids back into position, figure out who the engineers were we could trust, since some of them hated us so much they would do sabotage work. It was going to take a while.”

When Americans did think about a new Iraqi army, they often began with fears that it might become too strong too fast. “Everybody assumed that within Iraq it would be peaceful,” says T. X. Hammes, the author of *The Sling and the Stone*, who was then in Iraq as a Marine Corps colonel. “So the biggest concern was reassuring all of Iraq’s neighbors that Iraq would not be a threat. One of the ways you do that is by building a motor infantry force with no

logistics”—that is, an army that can’t sustain any large-scale offensive operation. Such an army might assuage concerns in Syria and Iran, but it would do little to provide internal security, and would not be prepared for domestic counter-insurgency work. (This tension has not been resolved: to this day the Iraqi government complains that the United States will not help it get adequate tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery.) Corrupt use of U.S. aid and domestic Iraqi resources was a constant and destructive factor. Last August the Knight Ridder newspapers revealed that Iraq’s Board of Supreme Audit had surveyed arms contracts worth \$1.3 billion and concluded that about \$500 million had simply disappeared in payoffs, kickbacks, and fraud.

Training the police would be as big a challenge as training the army. “There was no image of a non-corrupt police force anywhere in the country,” Mattis says. And to make matters more difficult, the effort began just as the police were coming under attack from insurgents’ bombs and grenades.

Throughout the occupation, but most of all in these early months, training suffered from a “B Team” problem. Before the fighting there was a huge glamour gap in the Pentagon between people working on so-called Phase III—the “kinetic” stage, the currently fashionable term for what used to be called “combat”—and those consigned to thinking about Phase IV, postwar reconstruction. The gap persisted after Baghdad fell. Nearly every military official I

spoke with said that formal and informal incentives within the military made training Iraqi forces seem like second-tier work.

There were exceptions. The Green Berets and other elite units of the Special Forces have long prided themselves on being able to turn ragtag foreign armies into effective fighting units. But there weren't enough Special Forces units to go around, and the mainstream Army and Marine Corps were far less enthusiastic about training assignments. Especially at the start, training missions were filled mostly by people who couldn't get combat postings, and by members of the Reserves and the National Guard.

Walter Slocombe told me that there could have been a larger structural attempt to deal with the B-Team issue. "If we knew then what we know now," he said—that is, if people in charge had understood that public order would be the biggest postwar problem, and that Iraqis would soon resent the presence of foreigners trying to impose that order—"we would have done things differently. It would have made sense to have had an American military unit assigned this way from the beginning. They would be told, 'You guys aren't going to fight this war. You're not going to get Medals of Honor. But you will get due recognition. Your job is to run the occupation and train the Iraqis.' And we'd configure for that mission."

But of course that didn't happen. "I couldn't believe that we weren't ready for the occupation," Terence Daly, a retired Army colonel who learned the tactics of counterinsurgency in Vietnam, told me. "I was horrified when I saw the looting and the American inaction afterward. If I were an Iraqi, it would have shown me these people are not serious."

II. AUTUMN 2003–AUTUMN 2004: OVERWHELMED

By late 2003 the United States had lost time and had changed identity, from liberator to occupier. But in its public pronouncements and its internal guidance the administration resisted admitting, even to itself, that it now faced a genuine insurgency—one that might grow in strength—rather than merely facing the dregs of the old regime, whose power would naturally wane as its leaders were caught and killed. On June 16 Army General John Abizaid, newly installed as CENTCOM commander, was the first senior American official to say that in fact the United States now faced a "classical guerrilla-type campaign." Two days later, in congressional testimony, Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, seemed to accept the definition, saying, "There is a guerrilla war there, but ... we can win it." On June 30 Rumsfeld corrected both of them, saying that the evidence from Iraq "doesn't make it anything like a guerrilla war or an organized resistance." Two days after that President Bush said at a White House ceremony that some people felt that circumstances in Iraq were "such that they can attack us there. My answer is,

Bring them on." Meanwhile, the insurgency in Iraq grew worse and worse.

Improving the training of Iraqis suddenly moved up the list of concerns. Karl Eikenberry, an Army general who had trained Afghan forces after the fall of the Taliban, was sent to Iraq to see what was wrong. Pentagon briefers referred more and more frequently to the effort to create a new Iraqi military. By early 2004 the administration had decided to spend more money on troop training, and to make it more explicitly part of the U.S. mission in Iraq. It was then that a grim reality hit: how hard this process would actually be.

All indications from the home front were that training Iraqis had become a boring issue. Donald Rumsfeld, according to those around him, was bored by Iraq in general and this tedious process in particular.

"Training is not just learning how to fire a gun," I was told by a congressional staff member who has traveled frequently to Afghanistan since 9/11. "That's a part of it, but only a small part." Indeed, basic familiarity with guns is an area in which Iraqis outdo Americans. Walter Slocombe says that the CPA tried to enforce a gun-control law—only one AK-47 per household—in the face of a widespread Iraqi belief that many families needed two, one for the house and one for traveling.

Everyone I interviewed about military training stressed that it was only trivially about teaching specific skills. The real goal was to transform a civilian into a soldier. The process runs from the individual level, to the small groups that must trust one another with their lives, to the combined units that must work in coordination rather than confusedly firing at one another, to the concept of what makes an army or a police force different from a gang of thugs.

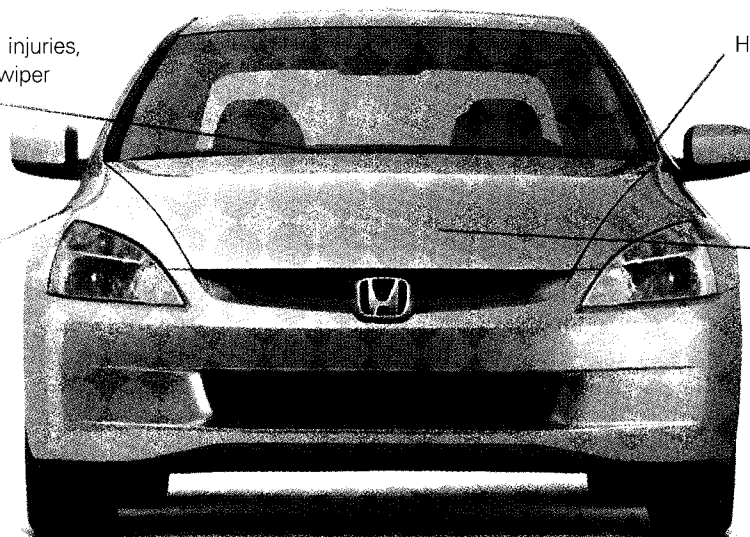
"The simple part is individual training," Jay Garner says. "The difficult part is collective training. Even if you do a good job of all that, the really difficult thing is all the complex processes it takes to run an army. You have to equip it. You have to equip all units at one time. You have to pay them on time. They need three meals a day and a place to sleep. Fuel. Ammunition. These sound simple, but they're incredibly difficult. And if you don't have them, that's what makes armies not work."

In countless ways the trainers on site faced an enormous challenge. The legacy of Saddam Hussein was a big problem. It had encouraged a military culture in which officers were privileged parasites, enlisted soldiers were

Every car company is concerned about the people inside its cars. But what about the people outside?

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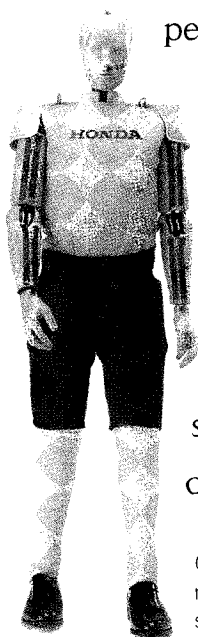


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cannon fodder, and noncommissioned officers—the sergeants who make the U.S. military function—were barely known. “We are trying to create a professional NCO corps,” Army Major Bob Bateman told me. “Such a thing has never existed anywhere in the region. Not in regular units, not in police forces, not in the military.”

The ethnic and tribal fissures in Iraq were another big problem. Half a dozen times in my interviews I heard variants on this Arab saying: “Me and my brother against my cousin; me and my cousin against my village; me and my village against a stranger.” “The thing that holds a military unit together is trust,” T. X. Hammes says. “That’s a society not based on trust.” A young Marine officer wrote in an e-mail, “Due to the fact that Saddam murdered, tortured, raped, etc. at will, there is a limited pool of 18–35-year-old males for service that are physically or mentally qualified for service. Those that are fit for service, for the most part, have a DEEP hatred for those not of the same ethnic or religious affiliation.”

The Iraqi culture of guns was, oddly, not an advantage but another problem. It had created gangs, not organized troops. “It’s easy to be a gunman and hard to be a soldier,” one expert told me. “If you’re a gunman, it doesn’t matter if your gun shoots straight. You can shoot it in the general direction of people, and they’ll run.” Many American trainers refer to an Iraqi habit of “Inshallah firing,” also called “death blossom” marksmanship. “That is when they pick it up and start shooting,” an officer now on duty in Baghdad told me by phone. “Death just blossoms around them.”

“U.S. trainers have made a heroic effort,” Ahmed Hashim, an expert at the Naval War College, explains. “But the Iraqi Security Forces are almost like a black hole. You put a lot in and little comes back out.”

The constant attacks from insurgents were a huge problem, and not just in the obvious ways. The U.S. military tries hard to separate training from combat. Combat is the acid test, but over time it can, strangely, erode proficiency. Under combat pressure troops cut corners and do whatever it takes to survive. That is why when units return from combat, the Pentagon officially classifies them as “unready” until they have rested and been retrained in standard procedures. In principle the training of Iraqi soldiers and policemen should take place away from the battlefield, but they are under attack from the moment they sign up. The pressure is increased because of public hostility to the foreign occupiers. “I know an Iraqi brigade commander who has

to take off his uniform when he goes home, so nobody knows what he’s done,” Barak Salmoni told me. The Iraqi commander said to him, “It really tugs at our minds that we have to worry about our families’ dying in the insurgency when we’re fighting the insurgency somewhere else.” The GAO found that in these circumstances security units from “troubled townships” often deserted en masse.

The United States, too, brought its own range of problems. One was legislative. Because U.S. forces had helped prop up foreign dictators, Congress in the 1970s prohibited most forms of American aid to police forces—as distinct from armies—in other countries. For the purposes of containing the insurgency in Iraq the distinction was meaningless. But administration officials used up time and energy through 2004 figuring out an answer to this technical-sounding yet important problem.

Language remained a profound and constant problem. One of the surprises in asking about training Iraqi troops was how often it led to comparisons with Vietnam. Probably because everything about the Vietnam War took longer to develop, “Vietnamization” was a more thought-through, developed strategy than “Iraqization” has had a chance to be. A notable difference is that Americans chosen for training assignments in Vietnam were often given four to six months of language instruction. That was too little to produce any real competence, but enough to provide useful rudiments that most Americans in Iraq don’t have.

The career patterns of the U.S. military were a problem. For family reasons, and to keep moving up in rank, American soldiers rotate out of Iraq at the end of a year. They may be sent back to Iraq, but probably on a different assignment in a different part of the country. The adviser who has been building contacts in a village or with a police unit is gone, and a fresh, non-Arabic-speaking face shows up. “All the relationships an adviser has established, all the knowledge he has built up, goes right with him,” Terence Daly, the counterinsurgency specialist from the Vietnam War, says. Every manual on counterinsurgency emphasizes the need for long-term personal relations. “We should put out a call for however many officers and NCOs we need,” Daly says, “and give them six months of basic Arabic. In the course of this training we could find the ones suited to serve there for five years. Instead we treat them like widgets.”

All indications from the home front were that training Iraqis had become a boring issue. Opponents of the war rarely talked about it. Supporters reeled off encouraging but hollow statistics as part of a checklist of successes the press failed to report. President Bush placed no emphasis on it in his speeches. Donald Rumsfeld, according to those around him, was bored by Iraq in general and this tedious process in particular, neither of which could match the challenge of transforming America’s military establishment.

The lack of urgency showed up in such mundane ways



An American soldier stops the looting of guns from inside the Ministry of Planning, Baghdad, April 2003

as equipment shortages. In the spring of 2004 investigators from the GAO found that the Iraqi police had only 41 percent of the patrol vehicles they needed, 21 percent of the hand-held radios, and nine percent of the protective vests. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, a branch of the military, had received no protective vests at all. According to the GAO report, "A multinational force assessment noted that Iraqis within the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps felt the multinational force never took them seriously, as exhibited by what they perceived as the broken promises and the lack of trust of the multinational force."

Although most people I spoke with said they had warm relations with many of their Iraqi counterparts, the lack of trust applied on the U.S. side as well. American trainers wondered how many of the skills they were imparting would eventually be used against them, by infiltrators or by soldiers who later changed sides. Iraq's Ministry of Defense has complained that the United States is supplying simpler equipment, such as AK-47s rather than the more powerful M4 rifles, and pickup trucks rather than tanks. Such materiel may, as U.S. officials stress, be far better suited to Iraq's current needs. It would also be less troublesome if Iraq and the United States came to be no longer on friendly terms.

And the biggest problem of all was the kind of war this new Iraqi army had to fight. "Promoting disorder is a legitimate objective for the insurgent," a classic book about insurgency says.

It helps to disrupt the economy, hence to produce discontent; it serves to undermine the strength and the authority of the counterinsurgent [that is, government forces]. Moreover, disorder ... is cheap to create and very costly to prevent. The insurgent blows up a bridge, so every bridge has to be guarded; he throws a grenade in a movie theater, so every person entering a public place has to be searched.

The military and political fronts are so closely connected, the book concludes, that progress on one is impossible without progress on the other: "Every military move has to be weighed with regard to its political effects, and vice versa."

This is not a book about Iraq. The book is *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, which was published nearly forty years ago by a French soldier and military analyst, David Galula, and is based on his country's experiences in Algeria and Vietnam.

Counterinsurgency scholarship has boomed among military intellectuals in the 2000s, as it did in the 1960s, and for the same reason: insurgents are the enemy we have to fight. "I've been reading a lot of T. E. Lawrence, especially through the tough times," Dave Petraeus said when I asked where he had looked for guidance during his year of supervising training efforts. An influential book on coun-

terinsurgency by John Nagl, an Army lieutenant colonel who commanded a tank unit in Iraq, is called *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife*. That was Lawrence's metaphor for the skills needed to fight Arab insurgents.

"No modern army using conventional tactics has ever defeated an insurgency," Terence Daly told me. Conventional tactics boil down to killing the enemy. At this the U.S. military, with unmatched firepower and precision, excels. "Classic counterinsurgency, however, is not primarily about killing insurgents; it is about controlling the population and creating a secure environment in which to gain popular support," Daly says.

From the vast and growing literature of counterinsurgency come two central points. One, of course, is the intertwining of political and military objectives: in the long run this makes local forces like the Iraqi army more potent than any foreigners; they know the language, they pick up subtle signals, they have a long-term stake. The other is that defeating an insurgency is the very hardest kind of warfare. The United States cannot win this battle in Iraq. It hopes the Iraqis can.

Last summer Marine General Peter Pace said that three Iraqi units had reached the "fully capable" level. In September the U.S. military commander in Iraq, Army General George Casey, lowered that estimate to one.

Through the second year of occupation most of the indications were dark. An internal Pentagon report found,

The first Iraqi Army infantry battalions finished basic training in early 2004 and were immediately required in combat without complete equipment ... Absent-without-leave rates among regular army units were in double digits and remained so for the rest of the year.

I asked Robert Pape about the AWOL and desertion problems that had plagued Iraqi forces in Mosul, Fallujah, and elsewhere. Pape, of the University of Chicago, is the author of *Dying to Win*, a recent book about suicide terrorism. "Really, it was not surprising that this would happen," he said. "You were taking a force that had barely been stood up and asking it to do one of the most demanding missions possible: an offensive mission against a city. Even with a highly loyal force you were basically asking them to sacrifice themselves. Search and destroy would be one of the last things you would want them to do."

A CAO report showed the extent of the collapse. Fifty percent of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps in the areas around Baghdad deserted in the first half of April. So did 30 per-

cent of those in the northeastern area around Tikrit and the southeast near al-Kut. And so did 80 percent of the forces around Fallujah.

This was how things still stood on the eve of America's presidential election and the beginning of a new approach in Baghdad.

III. AUTUMN 2004-AUTUMN 2005: PROGRESS BUT NO URGENCY

At the end of June 2004 Ambassador Bremer went home. His Coalition Provisional Authority ceased to exist, and an interim Iraqi government, under a prime minister selected by the Americans, began planning for the first nationwide elections, which were held in January of this year. The first U.S. ambassador to postwar Iraq, John D. Negroponte, was sworn in as Bremer left. And a new American Army general arrived to supervise the training of Iraqis: Dave Petraeus, who had just received his third star.

The appointment was noticed throughout the military. Petraeus, who holds a Ph.D. from Princeton, had led the 101st Airborne during its drive on Mosul in 2003 and is one of the military's golden boys. What I heard about him from other soldiers reminded me of what reporters used to hear about Richard Holbrooke from other diplomats: many people marveled at his ambition; few doubted his skills. Petraeus's new assignment suggested that training Iraqis had become a sexier and more important job. By all accounts Petraeus and Negroponte did a lot to make up for lost time in the training program.

Under Petraeus the training command abandoned an often ridiculed way of measuring progress. At first Americans had counted all Iraqis who were simply "on duty"—a total that swelled to more than 200,000 by March of 2004. Petraeus introduced an assessment of "unit readiness," as noted above. Training had been underfunded in mid-2004, but more money and equipment started to arrive.

The training strategy also changed. More emphasis was put on embedding U.S. advisers with Iraqi units. Teams of Iraqi foot soldiers were matched with U.S. units that could provide the air cover and other advanced services they needed. To save money and reduce the chance of a coup, Saddam Hussein's soldiers had only rarely, or never, fired live ammunition during training. According to an unpublished study from the U.S. Army War College, even the elite units of the Baghdad Republican Guard were allowed to fire only about ten rounds of ammunition per soldier in the year before the war, versus about 2,500 rounds for the typical U.S. infantry soldier. To the amazement of Iraqi army veterans, Petraeus introduced live-fire exercises for new Iraqi recruits.

At the end of last year, as the Iraqi national elections drew near, Negroponte used his discretion to shift \$2 billion from other reconstruction projects to the training effort. "That will be seen as quite a courageous move, and one that paid big dividends," Petraeus told me. "It enabled the purchase of a lot



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of additional equipment, extra training, and more rebuilding of infrastructure, which helped us get more Iraqi forces out in the field by the January 30 elections."

The successful staging of the elections marked a turning point—at least for the training effort. Political optimism faded with the subsequent deadlocks over the constitution, but "we never lost momentum on the security front," Petraeus told me. During the elections more than 130,000 Iraqi troops guarded more than 5,700 polling stations; there were some attacks, but the elections went forward. "We have transitioned six or seven bases to Iraqi control," he continued, listing a variety of other duties Iraqi forces had assumed. "The enemy recognizes that if Iraqi security forces ever really get traction, they are in trouble. So all of this is done in the most challenging environment imaginable."

Had the training units avoided the "B Team" taint? By e-mail I asked an officer on the training staff about the "loser" image traditionally attached to such jobs within the military. He wrote back that although training slots had long been seen as "career killers," the importance of the effort in Iraq was changing all that. From others not involved in training I heard a more guarded view: If an Iraqi army emerges, the image of training will improve; if it doesn't, the careers of Petraeus and his successor Dempsey will suffer.

Time is the problem. As prospects have brightened inside the training program, they have darkened across the country. From generals to privates, every soldier I spoke with stressed that the military campaign would ultimately fail without political progress. If an army has no stable government to defend, even the best-trained troops will devolve into regional militias and warlord gangs. "I always call myself a qualified optimist, but the qualification is Iraqi leaders muddling through," one senior officer told me. "Certain activities are beyond Americans' control."

Ethnic tensions divide Iraq, and they divide the new army. "Thinking that we could go in and produce a unified Iraqi army is like thinking you could go into the South after the Civil War and create an army of blacks and whites fighting side by side," Robert Pape, of the University of Chicago, told me. "You can pay people to go through basic training and take moderate risks. But unless they're really loyal to a government, as the risks go up, they will run." Almost every study of the new Iraqi military raises doubts about how loyally "Iraqi" it is, as opposed to Kurdish, Shiite, or Sunni. The most impressive successes by "Iraqi" forces have in fact been by units that were really Kurdish *peshmurga* or Shiite militias.

"There is still no sense of urgency," T. X. Hammes says. In August, he pointed out, the administration announced with pride that it had bought 200 new armored vehicles for use in Iraq. "Two-plus years into the war, and we're proud! Can you imagine if in March of 1944 we had proudly announced two hundred new vehicles?" By 1944 American factories had been retooled to produce 100,000 warplanes. "From the president on down there is no urgency at all."

Since last June, President Bush has often repeated his "As Iraqi forces stand up ..." formula, but he rarely says anything more specific about American exit plans. When he welcomed Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, to the White House in September, his total comment on the training issue in a substantial welcoming speech was "Our objective is to defeat the enemies of a free Iraq, and we're working to prepare more Iraqi forces to join the fight." This was followed by the stand up/stand down slogan. Vice President Cheney sounds similarly dutiful. ("Our mission in Iraq is clear," he says in his typical speech. "On the military side we are hunting down the terrorists and training Iraqi security forces so they can take over responsibility for defending their own country." He usually follows with the slogan but with no further details or thoughts.)

Donald Rumsfeld has the same distant tone. Condoleezza Rice and Paul Wolfowitz have moved on to different things. At various times since 9/11 members of the administration have acted as if catching Osama bin Laden, or changing Social Security, or saving Terri Schiavo, or coping with Hurricane Katrina, mattered more than any possible other cause. Creating an Iraqi military actually matters more than almost anything else. But the people who were intent on the war have lost interest in the only way out.

A Marine lieutenant colonel said, "You tell me who in the White House devotes full time to winning this war." The answer seems to be Meghan O'Sullivan, a former Brookings scholar who is now the president's special assistant for Iraq. As best I can tell from Nexis, other online news sources, and the White House Web site, since taking the job, late last year, she has made no public speeches or statements about the war.

IV. HOW TO LEAVE WITH HONOR

Listening to the Americans who have tried their best to create an Iraqi military can be heartening. They send e-mails or call late at night Iraq time to report successes. A Web magazine published by the training command, called *The Advisor*, carries photos of American mentors working side by side with their Iraqi students, and articles about new training techniques. The Americans can sound inspired when they talk about an Iraqi soldier or policeman who has shown bravery and devotion in the truest way—by running toward battle rather than away from it, or rushing to surround a suicide bomber and reduce the number of civilians who will be killed.

But listening to these soldiers and advisers is also deeply discouraging—in part because so much of what they report is discouraging in itself, but even more because the conversations head to a predictable dead end. Sooner or later the question is What do we do now? or What is the way out? And the answer is that there is no good answer.

Let me suggest a standard for judging endgame strategies in Iraq, given the commitment the United States has already made. It begins with the recognition that even if it were pos-

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sible to rebuild and fully democratize Iraq, as a matter of political reality the United States will not stay to see it through. (In Japan, Germany, and South Korea we did see it through. But while there were postwar difficulties in all those countries, none had an insurgency aimed at Americans.) But perhaps we could stay long enough to meet a more modest standard.

What is needed for an honorable departure is, at a minimum, a country that will not go to war with itself, and citizens who will not turn to large-scale murder. This requires Iraqi security forces that are working on a couple of levels: a national army strong enough to deter militias from any region and loyal enough to the new Iraq to resist becoming the tool of any faction; policemen who are sufficiently competent, brave, and honest to keep civilians safe. If the United States leaves Iraq knowing that non-American forces are sufficient to keep order, it can leave with a clear conscience—no matter what might happen a year or two later.

In the end the United States may not be able to leave honorably. The pressure to get out could become too great. But if we were serious about reconstituting an Iraqi military as quickly as possible, what would we do? Based on these interviews, I have come to this sobering conclusion: the United States can best train Iraqis, and therefore best help itself leave Iraq, only by making certain very long-term commitments to stay.

America's hopes today for an orderly exit from Iraq depend completely on the emergence of a viable Iraqi security force. All current indications suggest that no such viable Iraqi security force is about to emerge.

Some of the changes that soldiers and analysts recommend involve greater urgency of effort, reflecting the greater importance of making the training succeed. Despite brave words from the Americans on the training detail, the larger military culture has not changed to validate what they do. "I would make advising an Iraqi battalion more career-enhancing than commanding an American battalion," one retired Marine officer told me. "If we were serious, we'd be gutting every military headquarters in the world, instead of just telling units coming into the country they have to give up twenty percent of their officers as trainers."

The U.S. military does everything in Iraq worse and slower than it could if it solved its language problems. It is unbelievable that American fighting ranks have so little help. Soon after Pearl Harbor the U.S. military launched major Japanese-language training institutes at universities

and was screening draftees to find the most promising students. America has made no comparable effort to teach Arabic. Nearly three years after the invasion of Iraq the typical company of 150 or so U.S. soldiers gets by with one or two Arabic-speakers. T. X. Hammes says that U.S. forces and trainers in Iraq should have about 22,000 interpreters, but they have nowhere near that many. Some 600,000 Americans can speak Arabic. Hammes has proposed offering huge cash bonuses to attract the needed numbers to Iraq.

In many other ways the flow of dollars and effort shows that the military does not yet take Iraq—let alone the training effort there—seriously. The Pentagon's main weapons-building programs are the same now that they were five years ago, before the United States had suffered one attack and begun two wars. From the Pentagon's policy statements, and even more from its budgetary choices, one would never guess that insurgency was our military's main challenge, and that its main strategic hope lay in the inglorious work of training foreign troops. Planners at the White House and the Pentagon barely imagined before the war that large numbers of U.S. troops would be in Iraq three years later. So most initiatives for Iraq have been stopgap—not part of a systematic effort to build the right equipment, the right skills, the right strategies, for a long-term campaign.

Some other recommended changes involve more-explicit long-range commitments. When officers talk about the risk of "using up" or "burning out" the military, they mean that too many arduous postings, renewed too frequently, will drive career soldiers out of the military. The recruitment problems of the National Guard are well known. Less familiar to the public but of great concern in the military is the "third tour" phenomenon: A young officer will go for his first year-long tour in Iraq or Afghanistan, and then his second. Facing the prospect of his third, he may bail out while he still has time to start another, less stressful career.

For the military's sake soldiers need to go to Iraq less often, and for shorter periods. But success in training Iraqis will require some Americans to stay there much longer. Every book or article about counterinsurgency stresses that it is an intimate, subjective, human business. Establishing trust across different cultures takes time. After 9/11 everyone huffed about the shocking loss of "human intelligence" at America's spy agencies. But modern American culture—technological, fluid, transient—discourages the creation of the slow-growing, subtle bonds necessary for both good spy work and good military liaison. The British had their India and East Asia hands, who were effective because they spent years in the field cultivating contacts. The American military has done something similar with its Green Berets. For the training effort to have a chance, many, many more regular soldiers will need to commit to long service in Iraq.

The United States will have to agree to stay in Iraq in another significant way. When U.S. policy changed from counting every Iraqi in uniform to judging how many whole



units were ready to function, a triage decision was made. The Iraqis would not be trained anytime soon for the whole range of military functions; they would start with the most basic combat and security duties. The idea, as a former high-ranking administration official put it, was “We’re building a spearhead, not the whole spear.”

The rest of the spear consists of the specialized, often technically advanced functions that multiply the combat units’ strength. These are as simple as logistics—getting food, fuel, ammunition, spare parts, where they are needed—and as complex as battlefield surgical units, satellite-based spy services, and air support from helicopters and fighter planes.

The United States is not helping Iraq develop many of these other functions. Sharp as the Iraqi spearhead may become, on its own it will be relatively weak. The Iraqis know their own territory and culture, and they will be fighting an insurgency, not a heavily equipped land army. But if they can’t count on the Americans to keep providing air support, intelligence and communications networks, and other advanced systems, they will never emerge as an effective force. So the United States will have to continue to provide all this. The situation is ironic. Before the war insiders argued that sooner or later it would be necessary to attack, because the U.S. Air Force was being “strained” by its daily sorties over Iraq’s no-fly zones. Now that the war is over, the United States has taken on a much greater open-ended obligation.

In sum, if the United States is serious about getting out of Iraq, it will need to re-consider its defense spending and operations rather than leaving them to a combination of inertia, Rumsfeld-led plans for “transformation,” and emergency stopgaps. It will need to spend money for interpreters. It will need to create large new training facilities for American troops, as happened within a few months of Pearl Harbor, and enroll talented people as trainees. It will need to make majors and colonels sit through language classes. It will need to broaden the Special Forces ethic to much more of the military, and make clear that longer tours will be the norm in Iraq. It will need to commit air, logistics, medical, and intelligence services to Iraq—and understand that this is a commitment for years, not a temporary measure. It will need to decide that there are weapons systems it does not require and commitments it cannot afford if it is to support the ones that are crucial. And it will need to make these decisions in a matter of months, not years—before it is too late.

America’s hopes today for an orderly exit from Iraq depend completely on the emergence of a viable Iraqi security force. There is no indication that such a force is about to emerge. As a matter of unavoidable logic, the United States must therefore choose one of two difficult alternatives: It can make the serious changes—including certain commitments to remain in Iraq for many years—that would be necessary to bring an Iraqi army to maturity. Or it can face the stark fact that it has no orderly way out of Iraq, and prepare accordingly. ■

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MISSING BELLOW

A family story

BY SCOTT TUROW

Photo illustration by Marc Yankus

.....

I never met Saul Bellow. Billions who walk the planet—Bantu tribesmen and Brazilian rose farmers and factory workers in Guangdong Province—could say the same thing if they had an inkling who Saul Bellow was, and so could millions of the late novelist's admirers who relished his work but never really imagined that their paths might cross his. But in my case this non-event occurred by choice. Over the decades I had a glancing, minimal relationship with Bellow, awkward and comic in some of its dimensions, but I ultimately opted not to seek the great man out, a decision whose complex meanings seem to have come into focus for me since Bellow's death, in April of this year.

When I first began reading Bellow's work, in 1966, as a freshman at Amherst College, it was as if a hand had reached up and dragged me into the pages. My ambition was to be a novelist, and I read all contemporary fiction intently, a detective looking for clues. But Bellow overpowered me in a way no other writer had. I remember hiking through the snow with missionary determination in November of 1969 to get a copy of *The Atlantic*—where Bellow's only novel published during my college years, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, was first serialized—the day it reached the stands.

To say merely that I read and re-read all of Bellow does not come close to portraying my fixation. I studied Bellow like Scripture, reflecting on every word, sometimes picking out a favorite paragraph and musing on it for an hour, even sometimes running my fingertips across the words as if they were in Braille. How did he do that? I always wondered. How did he manage to pipe the sound of an entire human chorus through his powerful voice? How could he sing the scales, as it were, in different pitches, with an effect of such eloquence and comedy? One of the most insistent messages in Bellow's gloriously varied rhetorical style—which effectively fused the argot of Chicago tough guys with the high-flown oratory of a professor, often in the same sentence—is that the power of ideas reaches into and enriches everyday life, a lesson of unique timeliness for someone in the middle of a college education.

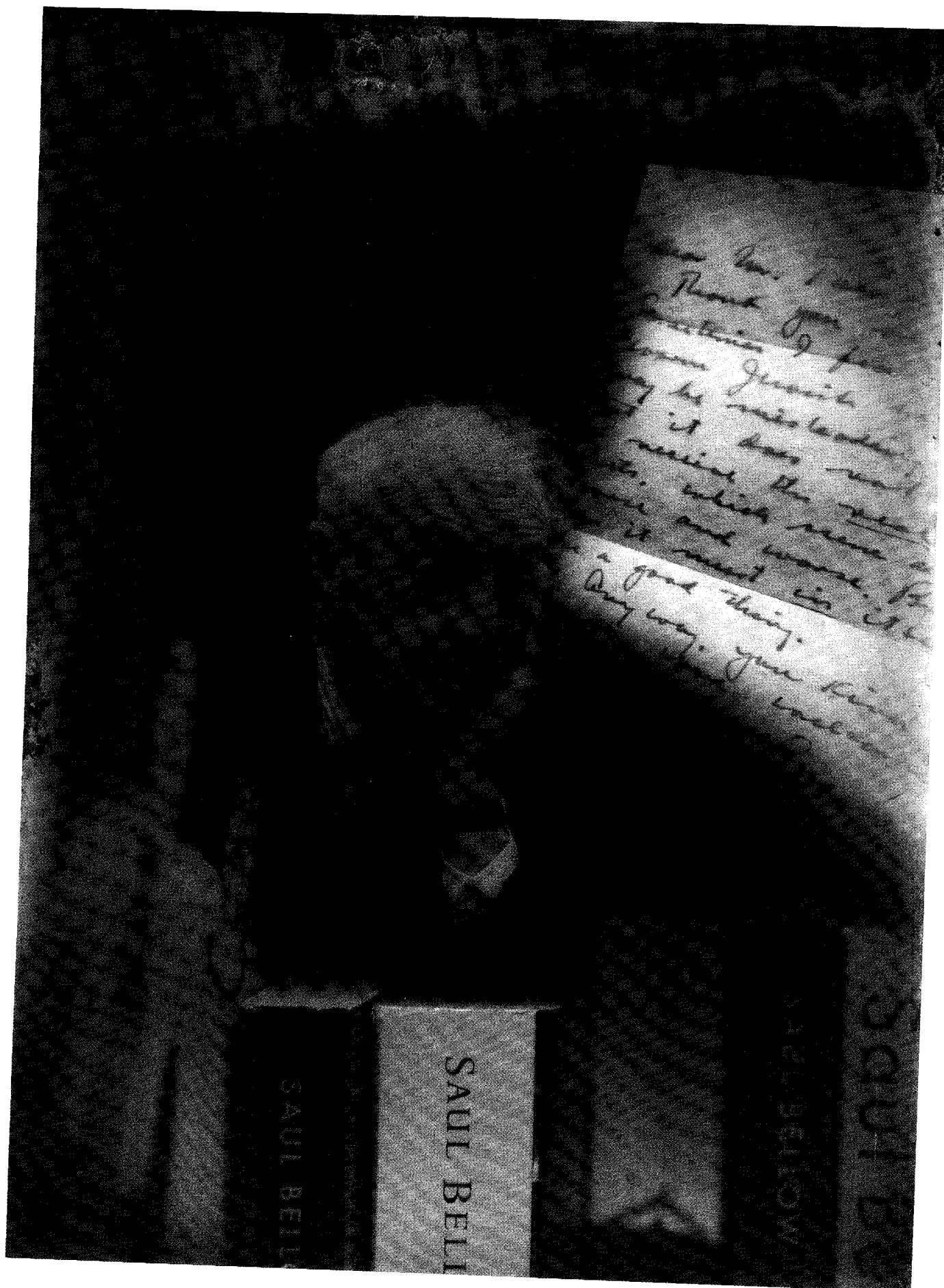
Scott Turow is the author of nine books, including Presumed Innocent. His seventh novel, Ordinary Heroes, about an army lawyer in Europe during World War II, was published in November.

With a fan's typical ardor, I collected gossip and trivia about Bellow, and cross-examined anyone I found who knew him. It was a quest: I just had to understand everything I could about this man.

In retrospect I see other motives for my fierce attachment to Bellow's work besides a deep literary appreciation. Saul Bellow was not merely the Great American Novelist of my formative years, the usual straw-poll winner when critics were asked to name our leading living author, but also, like me, a Chicagoan and a Jew. The astonishing commercial success of *Herzog*, which was published in 1964 and spent forty-two weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list (it also garnered a fistful of literary prizes, including the National Book Award), made Bellow the intellectual prince of my celebrity-starved home town, where national success in the arts almost always comes only to those who have abandoned America's shoulder-chipped Second City. And that titanic civic pride was magnified intensely in Chicago's large Jewish community, where Bellow had come of age and where many people could claim, with justification, to know the models for various Bellow characters.

But not even Bellow's local fame fully accounted for my attraction. Saul Bellow, it turns out, grew up in the same Humboldt Park neighborhood as my father. They were rough age peers (Bellow was three years older), with striking congruences in their biographies. Both were the children of immigrants. My father as a young boy was known as David Turowetsky, and Bellow was Solomon rather than Saul. Each was the baby of the family, and both were sometimes scorned by their difficult fathers. My dad lost his mother at the age of four; Bellow's high school years were haunted by the lingering illness of Liza Bellow, who died only a month after her son graduated from Tuley High.

That high school, Tuley, was the same one my father attended. Because my grandfather did not want his motherless son on the streets, he pushed my dad into summer school, which led him to graduate from Tuley at the age of fifteen, in January of 1934, only one year after Bellow.



(In those years the Chicago public schools allowed grade-schoolers to start in January, and winter graduation classes at Tuley were nearly as large as those in June.)

This is not to suggest that my father and Saul Bellow were good friends. According to my dad's closest pal in those years, Irving Pesock, my father and he had only limited interaction with Bellow's circle—the self-styled “intelligentsia,” as Pesock refers to them, who wrote for *The Tuley Review*. I remember my father mentioning occasionally that in high school he had known Sydney J. Harris, one of Bellow's dearest high school chums, who went on to local renown as a columnist

To say merely that I read and re-read all of Bellow does not come close to portraying my fixation. I studied Bellow like Scripture, sometimes running my fingertips across the words as if they were in Braille.

for the *Chicago Daily News*. Most likely, given the evidence, my father and Bellow enjoyed the marginal acquaintance that comes from the brushing of shoulders in the cafeteria and the gym that would be routine in a school of roughly 1,200—the kind of contact that gives one the right to declare later in life, “Oh, yeah, I knew that guy in high school.” I remember excited talk in my house about *Herzog*. But I cannot establish at this point that my father even connected the world-famous novelist with Solomon Bellow.

That hardly mattered to me, because while either man was alive, I drew no conscious connection between Bellow and my father. I was enough of a Bellow aficionado that I sometimes surprised my friend Jim Atlas, the author of the most acclaimed Bellow biography, with the minutiae I had scraped up—details of love affairs, favored restaurants, his course of study in school—yet I somehow avoided recognizing that Bellow and my father had grown up blocks from each other and walked the halls of the same school at the same time.

One of my favorite psychological maxims, which I attribute to the psychoanalyst Myron Gunther, is “Every adolescent needs an adult to help him grow up, and it can't be a parent.” My father was an excellent physician whose rough charm many people savored. But he was a tough dad. Like many men of his generation, he was mystified by his emotions; they controlled him, but not in ways he could anticipate or name. Toward me I felt some clotted yearning. Having lost his mother at such an early age, my father needed a great deal from my mother, and inevitably treated his children as rivals at times. He was an obstetrician-gynecologist. While that may signify more mother issues

(as my psychiatrist aunt once pointed out), to his son the principal meaning was that he worked constantly. I had little time with my father and was hungry for his approval, which was seldom expressed. More often I was subjected to sharp sarcasm at the evidence of any shortcomings.

As a result, by the time I was seventeen I had concluded that I did not want to grow up to be my father. I spurned the idea of medical school—his hope for me—and instead, in a clever strategy of divide and conquer, absorbed my mother's ambition to be a novelist. It was a calling more in tune with my rapturous fantasy life and my endless love affair with narrative of every kind, whether in comics, TV, movies, or books. But having rejected my father's example, I still faced the question of how to become a man.

Thus enter Saul Bellow. As a boy who wanted to be a novelist, I couldn't have found a better idol than Bellow, who cast his enormous shadow over the world I came from. Bellow was a writer, a wild success, and a genius. In a few words, he was just the guy I wanted to be. Or was he perhaps the man I wished my father was? Or both? This kind of self-analysis can be a trap when it tries to become too precise. Suffice it to say that to me Saul Bellow was a very big deal. He was the articulate voice of my father's often opaque sensibility, and an interpreter of my father's world in the very terms, literary ones, I hoped to make my own: How could I not have been hooked, especially by *Seize the Day*, which I was assigned as a college freshman? The novella centers on poor Tommy Wilhelm's doomed struggle to win approval from his unforgiving doctor-father. I see all that now. But I recognized none of it then.

In September of 1970 I arrived as a writing fellow in the vaunted Stegner Program at Stanford, and ended up spending the next five years there, two as a fellow and three as a lecturer in the Creative Writing Program. In the Advanced Fiction Writing seminar, where fellows and graduate students read and discussed one another's work, I spoke of Bellow constantly. My passion was not widely shared. The workshop's most sophisticated thinkers about fiction—Chuck Kinder, Bill Kittredge, Raymond Carver—were drawn to a cooler, more minimal style. And Wallace Stegner, who today has his own coterie of those who regard him as the best novelist of his era, resented Bellow, seeing him as the designee of what Stegner called “the *Partisan Review* crowd”—the Jewish intellectuals who dominated the literary world and who had treated Wally with far more indifference than he deserved.

By then there was an unruly literary mob that wanted to knock Bellow off his throne. Published at the dawn of the era of political correctness, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* had shocked many readers, particularly in its portrayal of a regal black pickpocket whom Artur Sammler detects at work on the Riverside bus in Manhattan. The pickpocket, aware that he has been identified, follows Sammler home one day, forces the elderly one-eyed man against the wall in the vestibule of his

Because I can read,
I can understand. I can write a letter.
I can fill out a job application.
I can finally get off welfare.

Because I can read,
I can learn. I can help my daughter
with her homework,
I can inspire her to be better.
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apartment building, and then in warning exposes his flaccid penis, “a large tan-and-purple uncircumcised thing—a tube, a snake ... suggesting the fleshly mobility of an elephant’s trunk.” I give Bellow credit for his perspicacity in recognizing the lethal admixture of crime and sexuality that was already being adopted as an underground ideal of black masculinity, but it always seemed to me that the scene was fundamentally wrong—just not something that would happen that way—and that as such it opened Bellow and his book to the first real fusillades aimed at his world view. There is no more damaging charge against a novelist, especially a realist like Bellow, than the claim that he has got life wrong—especially when he can be characterized as a bigot, as Bellow was. On balance, though, I thought *Sammler* was magnificent, a stunning coming to terms with a world in which humankind was capable of both landing on the moon and perpetrating the Holocaust, and I was delighted when in early March of 1971 he—and I, in a way—were vindicated by his again winning the National Book Award. I was so pleased by this triumph that after several days of mental preparation I dared to write Bellow a congratulatory note. (Was it significant that my father was then enduring the first of his traumas over what was soon to become the hobgoblin of all obstetricians’ lives: a medical-malpractice lawsuit?) I did not keep a copy of the brief letter I sent, but I considered what I would write for so long, and my involvement with Bellow and his work was so charged, that I still remember the critical line. “Despite your reputation for putative solemnity,” I wrote, “I know you have a warm Jewish heart.” Because of that, I said, I believed he

SMALL HOUSE TORN DOWN TO BUILD A LARGER

Because it squatted on a piece of land
Whose cash price overtook and dwarfed its own,
Its owner couldn’t stand to let it stand,
But sold it to be stripped to vein and bone.
A mottled bathroom sink where hair was brushed
Until its drain grew maddeningly slow,
The toilet tank so difficult to flush,
That closet floor on which the cat would go,
Are rubble now. Acerbic histories
That ended in divorce, the hopeful past,
Sprawl with extracted nails and toppled trees,
Too little in the living room to last.

—X. J. KENNEDY

*X. J. Kennedy’s most recent collection,
The Lords of Misrule, won the 2004 Poets’ Prize.
A book of his new and selected poems will be published in 2007.*

might appreciate knowing how much his books meant to a humble graduate student in California.

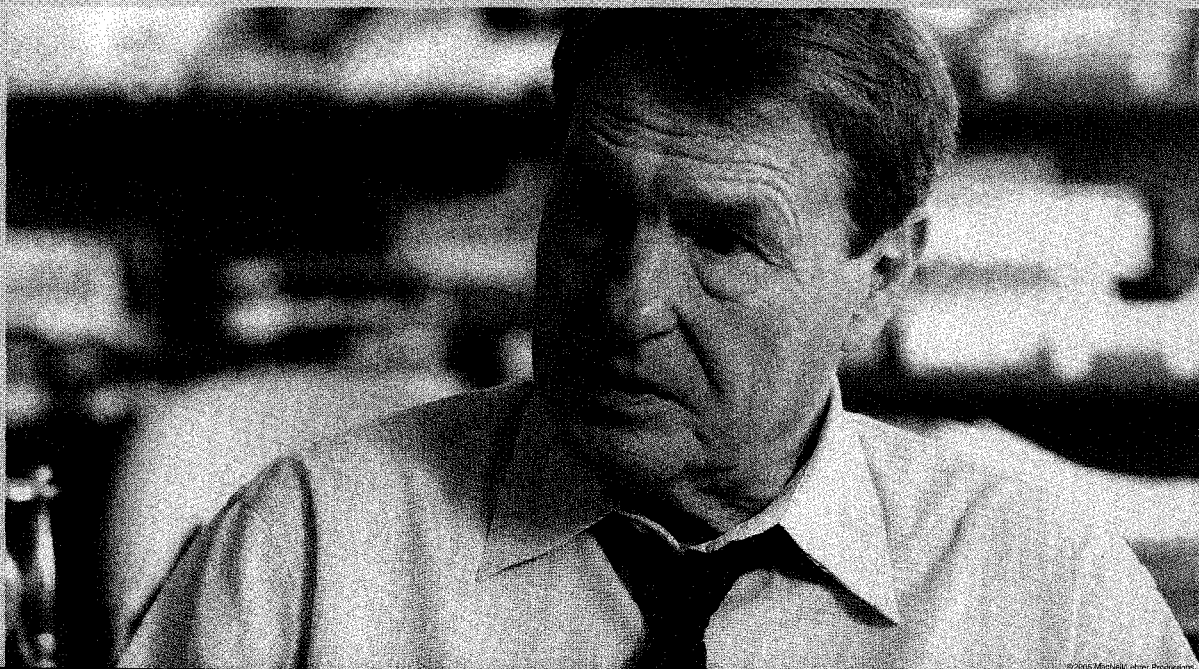
Leigh Bienen today is a writer of short fiction and a lawyer and lecturer at Northwestern’s law school, but years ago, before she was established in either career, she had been hired by Bellow after the publication of *Herzog* to help him deal with the torrent of mail the novel had brought him. This outpouring was invited not simply because *Herzog* had garnered a large best seller’s audience but also because it was an epistolary novel, made up of Moses Herzog’s urgent communications “to the newspapers, to people in public life, to friends and relatives and at last to the dead, his obscure dead, and finally the famous dead.” I had taken it for granted that Bellow would spend the rest of his life receiving letters from people who, like Moses, felt inclined to toss off a few passionate lines—contentious and quarrelsome, or adoring, but always impelled by the kind of boiling emotions to which Herzog regularly gave vent. This expectation both gave me permission to write and assured me of no response. I knew that my message would be a teaspoon in the ocean of congratulatory mail that Bellow was likely to receive, having survived his usurpers.

Yet the next month, as I remember it, a blue air-mail envelope from the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago arrived at my Palo Alto apartment. The one-page note was handwritten in a style, as one might expect of those who had the same teachers in penmanship, that, I now see, closely resembles my old man’s.

“Sometimes I fear ‘the warm Jewish heart’ may be misleading,” Bellow wrote, “i.e. that it does not give or receive the *real* facts. Which seem always worse and worse. But then it must *in itself* be a good thing.” Epigrammatic and musing, the few lines were essential Bellow, especially the brief meditation about the “*real* facts,” a preoccupation that was typical of his characters from Henderson the Rain King through *Sammler* and *Herzog*, all struggling to discern the true position of humankind in a universe made ever more chaotic by unruly human feelings. Leigh Bienen says that when she worked for Bellow it was not his habit to answer all fan mail, and generally his correspondence was typed. So something in my note must have moved him to dash off his quick reply—probably my choice of words about a “warm Jewish heart.” In retrospect, of course, I wonder if I don’t have my father to thank for Bellow’s response: did Bellow recognize the last name my father had taken by high school?

In the summer of 1975 I left Stanford, and academic life, to enter Harvard Law School. It would require an essay longer than this one to fully explain that decision. But I was fascinated by the law and dreamed (stupidly, my lawyer friends told me) of both practicing and continuing to write.

A year later, on October 21, 1976, Saul Bellow won the Nobel Prize in Literature. By then my own literary career, largely stalled to that point, had made a surprising advance:



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I was then putting the finishing touches on *One L*, a memoir of my first year at Harvard, which had been commissioned by Ned Chase for C. P. Putnam's Sons. Even so, I was excited when a Stanford friend, Mike Rogers, called to ask me to interview Bellow for *Rolling Stone*. Mike, who had enjoyed great success as a novelist and short-story writer, had also become a magazine editor, and subsequently remained in the publishing world for many years. At that point Mike and his boss, Jann Wenner, had decided that the journal of American pop culture should include an interview with America's latest high-culture hero. And Mike knew no one better informed about Bellow than I was.

After several days of mental preparation I dared to write Bellow a congratulatory note. A month later a blue air-mail envelope from the University of Chicago arrived at my Palo Alto apartment.

I started with a letter to Bellow's address at the Committee on Social Thought, which, unlike my fan letter, drew nothing in the way of a response.

Then a second request. And a third. Eventually I resorted to phone calls to Bellow's office, leaving unanswered messages with secretaries. Finally I went for the nuke of 1970s telecommunications: the person-to-person call. I would dash out of class to a pay phone in the basement of Austin Hall and tell the operator I wanted to speak to Saul Bellow. He was never available. But one day at lunchtime, when, I suppose, the secretaries were out, a surprisingly weak hello came from the other end after many rings.

Somehow I knew the gentle voice was Bellow's. I gave him no chance to speak, bursting forth. I can't recall exactly what I said, but I'm sure it's best summarized as "Please please please please please please please please please." How many interviews, I asked, could he possibly grant to someone who had not only read all his books but read each dozens of times? If I was not exactly Boswell, wasn't I the best he could hope for in speaking to the American masses in the popular press? This assumed a fact, as I was learning to say, that was not in evidence—namely, that Bellow had any interest in being understood by that audience on any terms other than the ones he had established in his books.

One of my favorite moments in *Herzog* comes when Moses Herzog has a fender-bender on Lake Shore Drive, in Chicago. The police officers who arrive at the scene are, in the parlance of the mid-1960s, "two big Negro cops." Revered and famous though Professor Herzog is, the cops examine his license and address him as "Moses." "There

it was," Herzog thinks, "that note of deadly familiarity that you heard only when immunity was lost." It is a lovely little illustration of the mutability of power and the tyranny of petty bureaucrats (and a potent vignette about racial payback, since these middle-aged black cops have been relegated to traffic patrol).

Now, as I beseeched Bellow, and he began his demurrers, the operator suddenly broke in. "Wait a minute," she said harshly, "wait a minute." We had yet to establish that I had reached the proper person, as the call's terms required. And so she addressed the Nobel laureate just like the cops on Lake Shore Drive, albeit in a drilling Dorchester accent. "Wait a minute," she said again. "Is this Saul?"

How could he deny it? He had no more wish to continue this conversation than to use sandpaper as a face towel, but in a tinier voice than the one in which he had answered the phone, he submitted to petty authority. Yes, he reluctantly admitted, he was in fact the wanted man.

The operator left us, and our conversation lasted no more than another minute. I begged, and Bellow said no several times. He was polite, even kindly. He did not disparage *Rolling Stone*, or even me. He was, he said, just not interested in being interviewed yet again. He sounded beleaguered by the attention that had come with the Nobel. We hung up. It was, as it turned out, the only conversation I had with Saul Bellow in my life.

Bellow's magic did not work on everyone. As I pressed friends and relatives to read his books over the years, they often had a common complaint: nothing happens. This is a fair observation about Bellow's novels, whose plots can usually be summarized as follows: a guy wanders around. Bellow's protagonists think, they fulminate, they suffer, their brains speed them through life like meteors, but outside events provide only occasional propulsion. The action of these novels is for the most part routine. We read Bellow to find out about ideas, values, nuanced reflection—not what happens next.

As the years had worn on, as I slunk from adolescence to young adulthood, as I accepted the fact that I was not Saul Bellow, I had begun to think differently about the mission of fiction, or at least my own writing. Storytelling in particular seemed to have been neglected in American realism, of which Bellow was the champ. Realist writers were committed to representing the middle range of experience, the mundane daily existence that virtually all of us endure most of the time. "What happens next?" was not a question the arch-realists wanted their readers to ask, because the answer was assumed: "What happened the day before." Melodrama, coincidence, extreme events, were not, therefore, the proper centerpieces of fiction, and the plots of Bellow novels like *Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, and *Seize the Day* were clearly not intended to increase a reader's heart rate. But I was spending my days as a prosecutor in Chicago,

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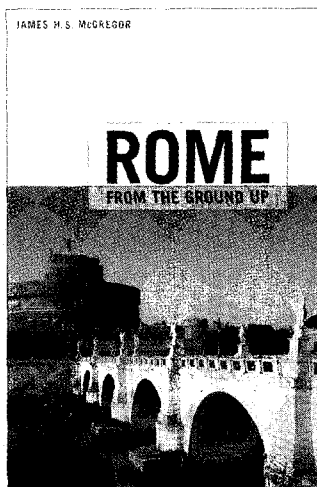
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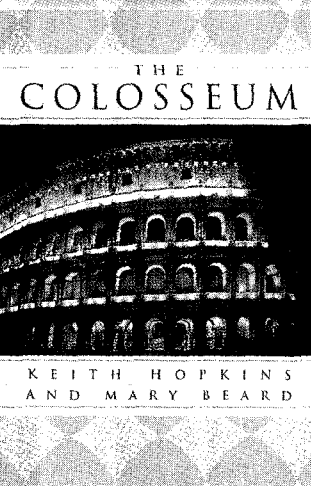


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living in a world animated by a constant struggle with the transgression of norms. And I was repeatedly struck by the spell that came over a courtroom when the critical witness in a criminal case took the stand to offer his account of how evil had happened. There was a lesson there to me. Our lives may be ensnared in a web of dailiness, but our imaginations are not. There is something essential in our fascination with crime and the law's struggle to impose reason on impulses that have proved ungovernable for some. Of such reflections was my first published novel, *Presumed Innocent*, born.

Bellow had no more wish to continue this conversation than to use sandpaper as a face towel, but he submitted to petty authority. Yes, he reluctantly admitted, he was in fact the wanted man.

When *Presumed Innocent* appeared, in 1987, it changed my life. I went from being a prosecutor cadging moments to write on the commuter train to the author of a novel that was both at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list and hailed on the front page of the *Times Book Review*. More than one person pointed out to me that Saul Bellow was no longer the only hot literary gun in town, which I regarded as laughable. I put few contemporary writers in Saul Bellow's league, and I certainly would never make such a claim for myself. I was sure that Bellow would condemn *Presumed Innocent* for what it was confessedly meant to be: a work committed to the tropes of popular fiction with a plot whose events were anything but routine.

Nonetheless, the novel made me a local celebrity, with the attendant duties. Late in 1991 I signed a form letter from Chicago's largest literacy organization, asking hundreds of authors across the country to donate books for a fundraising auction. I did not even know who was on the mailing list, and I was therefore astonished when, in January of 1992, I found a note from Saul Bellow in my law office in-box. He had scratched his home address at the top of the page, commented on American illiteracy rates, and promised to send a book to the auction. Then he added, "I read your first novel with admiration and pleasure. The new one I haven't caught up with yet."

"The new one" was my second novel, *The Burden of Proof*, which had also been reviewed on the front page of the *Times Book Review*, albeit sourly. Nonetheless, the book had prolonged my fifteen minutes, landing me on the cover of *Time*, and had remained No. 1 on the *Times* best-seller list for eleven straight weeks in the summer of 1990.

I wrote back to Bellow at home, and enclosed a copy of *Burden*, telling him how thrilled I was to know that my work had come to his attention. I realize in retrospect that when a Nobel Prize winner bothers to send you a handwritten response to a form letter, and takes the trouble to give you his home address, he's not trying to remain remote. The logical thing would have been to propose lunch or a cup of coffee, and deliver my second novel in person. But Bellow for me was a figure steeped in symbolism, and I suppose I could not bring myself to think of his realm and mine converging in real life.

I was excited nevertheless to send him the book. Although I had occasionally imitated authors I admired, I had never tried to write like Bellow. But some of his diction and, more, his irony have stuck to me forever, in the way the lessons of youth always do. The internal chats of Sandy Stern, the protagonist of *The Burden of Proof*, palely echo several Bellow characters—something I had been aware of when I wrote, and which others had occasionally commented on. I hoped Bellow would recognize the homage and be flattered.

Thus I hardly got what I expected when Bellow sent a typed letter to my home eleven months later. He apologized for not acknowledging my gift earlier, which he blamed on "a succession of stunning deaths." One of those certainly was that of Allan Bloom, the author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, with whom Bellow had taught for more than a decade at the University of Chicago, and who had passed away the month before. Then Bellow continued,

I think I told you how much I admired *Presumed Innocent*. Of course your first book was particularly attractive. I have always succumbed happily to the terrible weight of criminality, investigation, and prosecution—especially on our own Chicago turf. *The Burden of Proof* could not match the attractions of its predecessor. I always hate to write critical letters and avoid them. I especially hate getting them myself. Because of my advanced age, there always seems to be an element of speaking *de haut en bas*. I shun that kind of thing and I would be terribly sorry to be seen by a colleague as anything but a fellow writer. I preferred your first book to your second, it's as simple as that. Now I shall look forward to the third. I apologize for what may appear to be impoliteness and send my best wishes.

Thirteen years later, I still don't know exactly what to make of this letter. It goes without saying that a simple thank-you note, especially nearly a year late, would have sufficed. I did not request or need this candid putdown, and I have never quite understood why Bellow would say he avoided critical letters and then drop this one in the mail. Nonetheless, if I were more secure, I might have recognized this blast from the mountaintop as entrée to a personal relationship founded on my acknowledgment that, whatever the whirling of literary fashion, Bellow was the master—ground I will always willingly concede. After all, I didn't like Bellow's novels equally either.

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But at that point I heard his message as unambiguously harsh. It did not help, of course, that this response out of the blue was the kind of gratuitous knock my father had regularly delivered when I was least suspecting. Reading the letter was a blow to the noggin, as Bellow might put it. Who looks a gift horse in the mouth like that? “De haut en bas” indeed. What was French for “jerk”?

I decided then that I was finished with Saul Bellow. I never wrote back, never sent the third novel he claimed to look forward to, never communicated again.

A year later Bellow was gone—wooded away by John Silber, the president of Boston University. Chicagoans were

stunned when Bellow’s intention to leave the University of Chicago was announced, in the spring of 1993, but I imagine the deaths that Bellow complained of in his letter to me had made Chicago seem a haunted place.

About a year later, the summer after Bellow took up his duties at BU, a prominent cultural journalist from Germany arrived to interview me in connection with the German publication of my third novel, *Pleading Guilty*.

“I met Saul Bellow last night,” my German visitor told me when our meeting began. I assumed that he had used his journey to Chicago also to interview Bellow, who was still turning up in the city now and then. But no, the encounter had been purely fortuitous. The German had gone into the Berghoff, a fabled Chicago eatery, and there in line in front of him, also alone, was Saul Bellow. The reporter recognized him, and they had a pleasant conversation. The Berghoff stands directly behind the Federal Building, where I had worked as an assistant U.S. attorney for eight years, and I had probably eaten a hundred meals in the place. The irony of this European’s wandering in once and meeting Chicago’s most celebrated literary citizen gave me a pang. Should I perhaps reconsider, I wondered, and seek out Bellow while he was around? But again I decided no. The memory of his letter remained fresh, and coming of age in the literary world I had learned more than once that some authors are better read than met.

Now and then in subsequent years I encountered friends of Bellow’s whom I’d amuse with the tales of our near midair collisions. Several offered to arrange a meeting. I suppose that if I’d bumped into Bellow in the Berghoff, as the German reporter had, I would have been thrilled, but I was unwilling to initiate a meeting, feeling that I would somehow be a supplicant. This was a psychodrama of my own authorship. But it remained imperative to me to say I didn’t need that.

And so Bellow’s passing was an occasion for mourning. The door was closed. My father, too, has been gone for several years, and I experienced again a bit of that startling absence. Reading the obits that mentioned that Bellow had attended Tuley, the mental crossing gates finally lifted and I realized that my relationship, such as it was, was with two men, not one—a harmonic that undoubtedly complicated my few personal dealings with Bellow, but which, I also realized, dramatically heightened my stake in his books and my appreciation of them. Lying in my Amherst dorm rooms, Bellow’s novels seizing me by force, I felt as if I were somehow reading the secret story of my own life. And I suppose I was. ■

AMBER

It never mattered that there was once a vast grieving:

*trees on their hillsides, in their groves, weeping—
a plastic gold dropping*

*through seasons and centuries to the ground—
until now:*

*On this fine September afternoon from which you are absent
I am holding, as if my hand could store it,
an ornament of amber*

you once gave me.

Reason says this:

The dead cannot see the living.

The living will never see the dead again.

The clear air we need to find each other in is gone forever, yet

*this resin
collected seeds, leaves, and even small feathers as it fell
and fell,*

*which now in a sunny atmosphere seem as alive as
they ever were,*

*as though the past could be present and memory itself
a Baltic honey—*

*a chafing at the edges of the seen, a showing off of just how much
can be kept safe*

inside a flawed translucence.

—EAVAN BOLAND

Eavan Boland teaches at Stanford University. Her recent books include After Every War: Twentieth-Century Women Poets, a collection of translations from the German; and Against Love Poetry, a book of poems.

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CAPTIVITY PAGEANT

December 1979: Christmas comes for the Great Satan

BY MARK BOWDEN

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It would be hard to say which came first, the unrelenting press attention or the public obsession. The story of fifty-some Americans being held hostage inside the U.S. embassy in Tehran provoked indignation but also piqued America's imagination. Scott Miller, a deejay at WOBL, in Oberlin, Ohio, had himself locked in a recording studio with only a sleeping bag. He spent part of every day tied to a chair, telling listeners he wanted to share the experience of the hostages. At the outset no one imagined that the Iran hostage crisis, which began on November 4, 1979, would go on for fully 444 days.

In Lawrence, Massachusetts, all the churches around city hall sounded their bells fifty times daily at noon to remember the American captives. In Columbus, Ohio, protesters marched to express their anger, chanting, "Nagasaki, Hiroshima, why not Iran!" In Manhattan 10,000 cabdrivers drove with their lights on to express solidarity with their captive countrymen.

Fall turned into winter. As Christmas approached, Tehran grew wet and cold. And the hostages waited.

By the third week of the takeover it was clear to the Students Following the Imam's Line—the group responsible for the hostage-taking—that the planned one-or-two-day occupation of the American embassy had become a prolonged siege. The students divided themselves into committees to handle the logistics of feeding, housing, and guarding their fifty-three captives—the number remaining after the imam, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, ordered the release of most of the women and African-Americans. Some of the fifty-three were kept in the basement of the chancery, the main office building, and in other spots around the compound, but the largest number were confined in the large, damp, windowless open basement of the embassy warehouse, a place the hostages dubbed the Mushroom Inn, because it seemed ideal for growing fungi. The space was divided into thirty or more cubicles defined by empty bookshelves. Each enclosure had a mattress, and some had a chair or a table. By December the stale air was

cold and clammy, the toilets reeked, and life had settled into a dull routine.

The bookshelves were remnants of the library at the old American High School in Tehran, where in happier days the offspring of embassy workers had attended classes. The books from that library, thousands of them, were piled up in the same basement. Vice Consul Richard Queen was asked to sift through the books and start a lending library. Queen was a gangly, bookish young man who, despite his fragile appearance, had been an accomplished distance runner in high school. He brought to the task an appetite for detail, sorting the books by subject matter.

Overseeing this effort was Hamid, a slight man with a fair, angular face, reddish-brown hair, and a sparse beard, who because of his propensity to cheerfully mislead his captives was known as "Hamid the Liar." His hair and skin color were atypical for an Iranian, and he seemed to compensate for this with an overabundance of zeal. When Hamid played checkers he would jump over his own pieces on the board as if they weren't there—a clear violation of universal rules. When his opponent complained, he would explain, "In Iran we always play this way. These are my men, and if I want to jump over them it is up to me!" Hamid earned his nickname primarily by lying about the mail, routinely telling the hostages that none had come when everyone knew (from the other guards) that mail from the United States arrived daily in sacks. When he did hand out mail, he played favorites, rewarding some hostages and punishing others. In his role as library supervisor Hamid permitted books to be borrowed only after he had checked personally to make sure they weren't "CIA"—even though his English was rudimentary at best. Returned books had to be given first to him, so that he could check to make sure no secret messages had been written or inserted in them.

In his fractured English he wrote out rules:

ATTENTION: LIBRARY PROCEDURES

- 1) You may never to take more than 20-twenty-20 of books from the month.
- 2) You may never to write in the twenty books your messages.

*Mark Bowden is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. This article is drawn from his book *Guests of the Ayatollah*, to be published in April by Grove/Atlantic.*



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- 3) To stack you found them return your books—20.
- 4) A student good in English will check for messages you should not write, if he finds this library will be destroyed.

Fat books were especially prized. Don Sharer, a Navy pilot, read *War and Peace* and *Moby-Dick*. The embassy press officer, Barry Rosen, began a steady diet of prison literature: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*; MacKinlay Kantor's *Andersonville*; Billy Hayes's *Midnight Express*; the autobiography of the French prison-escape artist Henri Charrière, *Papillon*; and James Clavell's *King Rat*. Greg Persinger, a Marine, tackled a volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, working his way through alphabetically.

The hostages were beginning to look ragged. Clean State Department and military faces sprouted stubble and then full beards; well-trimmed hair grew shaggy and then long. As the air chilled, they took whatever clothing the Iranians brought around and wore it in layers. Most looked as if they had fished their wardrobe out of a Salvation Army bin.

In what the students regarded as a “major concession,” they allowed three liberal American clergymen to visit and celebrate Christmas with the captives. All three were chosen, according to a spokesman for Iran's Revolutionary Council, because of “their militant history against imperialism.” Most famous was the Reverend William Sloane Coffin, the celebrated senior minister of New York City's Riverside Church. Coffin was a large man with sloping shoulders and long, curly dark hair that was retreating fast toward the crown of his head but still fell thickly over his ears. He did not seem ministerial, with his up-from-the-streets New York accent, earthy humor, and background as an officer in the Army and then in the CIA. But he had seen the light, left the Agency, and entered the ministry, achieving prominence as the chaplain of Yale University and a civil-rights worker long before he became nationally known for his often eloquent opposition to the Vietnam War. Accompanying Coffin were the Reverend William Howard, a tall, urbane, dignified African-American Baptist minister who headed the National Council of Churches and was a noted civil-rights and anti-apartheid activist, and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, a Catholic leader from Detroit who was famous for his advocacy of liberal issues inside and outside the Church. Coffin had defended the hostage-takers in public statements in the United States, saying, “We scream about the hostages, but few Americans heard the screams of tortured Iranians.”

The hostages were brought to the three clergymen in small groups for a series of services throughout Christmas Day. In session after session, wearing a flowing maroon robe, Coffin warned against the vice of “self-pity” and encouraged the captives to sing along with him as he played carols on the piano. The ceremonies were held in various rooms that had been decked with an Islamic approximation of Christmas trimmings. The students had decorated with help from one of the hostages, Army Sergeant Joe Subic, who was so

accommodating to his captors that they nicknamed him “Brother Subic.” Alongside the holiday decorations were the usual anti-American posters and revolutionary slogans. Cameras recorded the event for Iranian TV.

Many of the hostages were appalled by the event, by being made part of what they saw as a propaganda stunt, but Rick Kupke, a State Department communications technician, set aside his resentment when he spotted the treats laid out on a table—brownies, nuts, apples, and oranges. There was even a roasted turkey on a platter. Paul Lewis, a young Marine, was impressed enough by the goodies to go through the motions during his ceremony, though he ignored Coffin's exhortation to hold hands with his captors and sing. Many of the Marines refused to join in, and a good number of the other hostages showed little emotion or enthusiasm. Coffin hugged each one at the end of the ceremonies, and when he came to Lewis the young man whispered to him, “It's all bullshit.” In a brief conversation with Bill Keough, the former head of the American High School in Tehran, who had come to Tehran to retrieve school records and found

In a “major concession,” the Iranians allowed three liberal American clergymen to celebrate Christmas with the captives. All three were chosen because of “their militant history against imperialism.”

himself trapped by the takeover, Coffin remarked jokingly that he had often longed for an extended period of quiet in which to read and think and contemplate. Keough smiled grimly. It was the remark of a free man who was not being threatened daily with trial and execution. Al Golacinski, the embassy security chief, leaned over to William Howard at the ceremony he attended and whispered, “Don't believe what you are seeing; we're being treated like animals.”

“So I gathered,” Howard said.

The Baptist pastor managed to convey to each group that all of America—not just their families and friends—was intensely concerned with their fate. At each of the sessions the hostages were allowed to write brief notes to their families, which for many was their first communication since the takeover.

Forbidden to talk about politics or the hostages' situation, Colonel Chuck Scott, the embassy's military liaison, a ramrod career Army officer with a square jaw and a defiant demeanor, asked Howard intently, “What's the price of gas in America today?” Scott had thought long and hard about what question to ask if he got the chance, and had decided that the current price of oil would help him gauge how events in

Iran were playing around the world. Howard looked at the gallery of armed guards and asked them, "I don't suppose I should answer that question, do you?" Scott was annoyed. *Why couldn't he just have blurted out an answer? Why was he bending over so far to be helpful to these bastards?*

Seeing Scott's anger, Howard tried to change the subject. He said he had noticed in looking over the lists of hostages that Scott was from Georgia, and he began a story about the difficulties he had faced as a young African-American traveling in that state. This further angered Scott, who felt that he was being blamed for the racism the preacher mentioned having encountered.

For some of the hostages, however, the ceremonies were rich with feeling and gave them a fleeting sense of connection with home. Kathryn Koob fought to hold back tears during her ceremony. A friendly, once corpulent woman who had been in charge of the Iran-America Society, a cultural-exchange program, she had lost a striking amount of weight already and would in the coming months become reed-thin. Koob was profoundly sad to be cut off from her world, iso-

of his fellow Marines had refused the same request. Hermening, who at nineteen was the youngest of the hostages, agreed to say some things, but said he didn't want anything to do with anything "controversial." He loved America and was proud to be a Marine. He would sacrifice his life, if need be, to defend his country. But as he talked more with his captors, they got him to agree that he was not prepared to sacrifice his life to defend the deposed shah. He felt okay about saying that. He was ready to accept that the shah and SAVAK, the shah's secret police, had done terrible things to the Iranian people. He did not think those things gave the students the right to take over the embassy and hold him and his colleagues against their will, and he even wrote that down in one of the statements. He tried to get the students to promise not to edit his comments, but when they said no he agreed to go ahead anyway.

Hermening was excited about being on TV. Maybe his family back in Wisconsin would see him. This ordeal was making him famous, he was sure, and with that fame would come opportunity. At the motor pool he met Nilufar



lated from her family and any community of Christians; from familiar Christmas music, the swirl of shopping, cards, parties, and gift-giving. And yet somehow the holiday became, if anything, more meaningful to her as a prisoner. As she stood before Bishop Gumbleton, reunited for the first time in a month with the only other remaining female hostage—the embassy first secretary, Ann Swift—she felt herself trembling so violently that it took all her strength not to break down. She was afraid if she didn't control herself in front of the bishop, word would get back to her family that she wasn't doing well. So she balled her hands into fists so tight that the nails cut into her skin.

Something else happened that Christmas Day. Early in the morning Marine Guard Kevin Hermening was given a clean turtleneck sweater, and he, Joe Subic; Steve Lauterbach, an embassy administrator from Ohio; and Jerry Plotkin, a California businessman, were taken to an office at the motor pool, where TV cameras were waiting.

The men were asked to make a statement on camera during the Christmas party to be held later that day. Over in the Mushroom Inn, unbeknownst to Hermening, most

Ebtekar, the young Iranian woman whose fluent, American-accented English had elevated her to the role of international spokesperson for the students (and who today is one of Iran's vice-presidents and the minister of the environment), and fell into easy conversation with her. Hermening told her he was surprised that a woman held a position of such importance. He said if she was so successful already, maybe someday she would be a big leader in Iran.

"If I ever get back to the United States, and get into politics, maybe I'll become a leader there," he said. He joked that years later the two of them would be shaping world events. Ebtekar laughed gaily at the idea.

While Coffin, Howard, and Gumbleton looked on with apparent approval, the four captives performed precisely as their captors wished. Each read a statement critical of the United States. Hermening and Lauterbach read their statements in a flat monotone. Lauterbach, his hair long and his beard untrimmed, seemed particularly pained to be participating. Plotkin, who had been trapped at the embassy by chance on the day of the takeover, seemed more comfortable. Subic, who often held the microphone, appeared to be speaking in full earnest, even cheerfully.

FILM STILL COURTESY MICK CSÁKY/ANTELOPE

Chubby and blond, Subic had been working as a clerk at the embassy and began making himself useful to the Iranians on the day of the takeover, leading them around the compound and identifying his bound, blindfolded colleagues by name and job description. Since then he had been allowed special privileges: a telephone, warm clothing, a steady supply of snack foods from the embassy commissary. In return he had helped with things like the Christmas decorations. Hermening had been made Subic's roommate, and Subic had helped convert the young Marine into a more pliable prisoner.

Some of the statement Hermening read had been prepared for him, and some of it—about getting letters from home and receiving medical care when it was needed—was what he had written. The students had added lines about how the American government had sold fertilizer to Iran that killed all its crops. Hermening read on. The statement summarized the American-led coup that unseated Muhammad Mossadeq in 1953, before Hermening was born; told how the United States had placed the shah on the throne; and said that Hermening and the other hostages were suffering because America refused to own up to its crimes and return the shah to face judgment in Iran.

The Reverend William Sloane Coffin remarked jokingly to one hostage that he had often longed for an extended period of quiet. It was the remark of a free man who was not being threatened daily with trial and execution.

"It hurts us to have to say that, but that is what we believe to be the situation," he read. "We will always be Americans and still pray that they make the right decision as soon as possible."

Clean-shaven and neatly groomed, his hair trimmed and parted down the middle, Hermening looked hale and fit; he towered over the guards in the room, and despite his wooden performance he did not seem like a man being forced to do something against his will. Although he felt awkward about reading the statement even as the words came out, he thought, *Who is going to believe this?* Clearly the statement was being made under duress, so he didn't worry about it.

Jerry Plotkin read with apparent feeling: "Why is the ex-shah given protection and sanctuary in the United States of America? He is an accused criminal and admitted his abuses of power on Iranian TV before he was dethroned. Why isn't he extradited like any other alleged criminal would be?"

Only glancing at his prepared statement, Subic offered the

most dramatic personal testimony. He wore a colorful sweater and had grown a thin beard. In his short time of traveling in Iran before the embassy was taken, he said, he had begun to see the evils wrought by the American-supported shah. "We started to see more and more poor people, people without homes, food, education. I asked myself, what had the shah done? My thinking started to turn around. My eyes and mind were starting to awake to the truth."

Subic then stepped around to the front of the table where the four sat, holding the microphone in one hand and in the other displaying a "special" Christmas card that "the hostages" had made for Khomeini. It was actually his own work. He read from the card: "A Christmas wish especially for you, Imam Khomeini. Merry Christmas. May Christmas bring you lasting joy and lovely memories. Merry Christmas, the American Hostages, 25 December 1979. Tehran, Iran." If he was aware of how he might appear to his fellow Americans, he showed no sign of it. He seemed proud of himself, sincere, and entirely at ease.

Two weeks after the Christmas celebrations a nearly hour-long film was released, and portions were played on all three American TV networks. The film had aired in Tehran over the holidays, and had been offered at that time to American TV. But despite the huge interest in the hostages, the networks balked at the conditions: a fee of \$21,250 and a promise to air the film in full, along with windy speeches from Iranian captors. After a few days the students dropped their demands and handed over the film. Their propaganda show was meaningless if no one saw it.

Trapped on the third floor of Iran's Foreign Ministry, Bruce Laingen, the embassy's chargé d'affaires, its highest-ranking diplomat; his political secretary, Vic Tomseth; and Mike Howland, an assistant security officer, had access to Iranian television. The three had left the embassy for a meeting at the Foreign Ministry on the day of the takeover, and had been stranded there ever since. They were not hostages, but they were not free, either. When Laingen saw the propaganda film of his cooperative staff members, he was shocked. He wrote angrily in his diary that evening, "I think tonight I have learned to hate."

... Far and away the bulk of the film was of these hostages reading a prepared statement, praising the revolutionary zeal of their captors, reciting the misdeeds of the embassy in supporting the Shah, citing documents discovered in the embassy to suggest "espionage," and calling on the US government to return the Shah to Iran. All this was done in what appeared to be a rehearsal reading, seriatim, by the hostages of their statement, the desk in front of them displaying "evidence" of one kind or another. Only one (Steve Lauterbach) of the four seemed in any way hesitant in what he was reading. The hostage who seemed to preside, Joe Subic, clearly was, or seemed to be, relishing his role. A young marine, Kevin Hermening, too, seemed relaxed and at ease. The fourth, the businessman Jerry

Plotkin, read a separate statement, and he, too, seemed in control of himself.

All of this culminated in young Subic displaying a Christmas card from which he read a special greeting to Imam Khomeini on behalf of the hostages. All of this is incredible. I have heard of brainwashing and mind control. I have read of such and recognize that in all hostage situations this is commonplace. But here is an example involving people I *know* and whom I *respect* . . . Eight weeks of confinement and harassment by sound from the crowds in the streets brought the hostages to the point of apparent servitude to their captors' purposes. And all this in a setting of Christmas with the two priests sitting docilely, watching and listening to the entire charade.

If the students thought such images were going to affect public opinion in the United States, they were right. Americans were horrified. There was a further outpouring of sympathy for the hostages. Bishop Gumbleton explained in press conferences at home that the four men had clearly been forced to make the statements. He told reporters that while the men were reading, one of them (Hermening) had whispered to him, "This is just a put-up job. Don't pay any attention to what you hear."

Gumbleton said he had asked, "Aren't you afraid of what might happen if I report that when I return?"

"Just tell the truth, sir," Hermening told him. "That's all we care about."

Laingen didn't need the bishop of Detroit to tell him that his colleagues were under great duress. He knew that those of his colleagues who had attended the Christmas celebrations were the most fortunate of the hostages. Others had it considerably worse, and had not been seen or heard from since the takeover—men like the CIA station chief Thomas Ahern and the Agency officers Bill Daugherty and Malcolm Kalp; the embassy's political officer, Michael Metrinko; and others. Laingen knew they had been undergoing intensive interrogation, and he could only wonder whether they were dead or alive.

He felt guilty that his own confinement was so much easier. On Christmas Eve he, Tomseth, and Howland had received a gift from the Spanish ambassador—a wicker basket stuffed with various kinds of Iranian candy. The British ambassador visited and brought sturdier fare: a variety of meats and snacks and a bottle of "cough syrup," which contained a lovely red wine for dinner that evening—all the more delicious after such long deprivation. The three American clergymen had also paid a visit, and the six had talked together for hours. Tomseth was impressed with Howard and Gumbleton, whom he felt to be sincere and there purely for humanitarian reasons. He was suspicious of Coffin, who had the air of a grandstander about him. It seemed to Tomseth that the famous leftist preacher was playing to his home audience. In one glib aside Coffin had remarked, "This situation is much too serious to be left in the hands of professionals!"

Coffin seemed not to appreciate that he had just insulted three foreign-service professionals.

"You are being absolutely silly," Laingen told him.

After they left, Laingen hoped that the clergymen, whatever their political motives in coming, had been appropriately shocked by the zealotry of the students and the strange new political contours of Iran. Islamic fundamentalism posed a threat that transcended the traditional liberal-conservative divisions of Western politics. Liberals like these three visitors had a natural tendency to see any revolutionary as ideological kin, he thought, but they needed to be careful in this case about whom they were cozying up to. The world was a more complicated place than they imagined. Dissenters in Iran were being led to the gallows and to firing squads in droves. In a speech just days before, the imam had defended the great official bloodletting going on in his country as "the blessing of God on a human society," and for good measure had praised amputating the hands of thieves and publicly whipping "prostitutes" (a term with a somewhat broader definition in Islamic society than in the West). Khomeini had ridiculed the Western concept of human rights, saying that the advocates of such liberal notions were ignorant of true humanity, because in their eyes "a man is no more than just an animal." A new form of totalitarianism was taking shape—a religious variation on an ugly twentieth-century theme.

Michael Metrinko spent the holiday as he had spent all his days since the first week of the takeover, locked in a windowless basement storage room by himself. He had been invited to the Christmas party, but he wanted no part of a propaganda show. When his guards brought him a gift from the ceremony, a plate of turkey and stuffing, cookies, and decorated marshmallows, the food was tempting; Metrinko was hungry, but he was galled by how self-congratulatory his captors seemed, how generous and noble and proudly Islamic. He accepted the plate, and when they left him alone to eat, he sat staring at the food.

Then he knocked on the door and said he needed to use the toilet. When the door opened, Metrinko emerged holding the gift plate before him. He marched down the hall into the bathroom and dumped the contents into the toilet bowl. He made sure the guards saw him do it.

They were furious with him. He had insulted their hospitality and kind intentions. He was crazy! When they shoved him back into his room and slammed the door shut, Metrinko felt a momentary pang at having lost the meal. What a glorious treat he had denied himself! But his remorse was nothing next to the pleasure he took in delivering the insult. It had hit home and wounded them, and that was something that gave a more lasting pleasure than the food ever could have. ▀

The film stills of Reverend William Sloane Coffin's Christmas visit to the hostages are from archival footage that appeared in the documentary film 444 Days: The Iran Hostage Crisis, produced by Mick Csáky.

SULTAN OF THE STEPPES

*Is he a new Khan? A Muslim progressive? An economic modernizer?
A vainglorious despot? Kazakhstan's Soviet-schooled dictator has enough oil
to make himself into anything he wants*

BY PAUL STAROBIN

.....

Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of Kazakhstan, is a man of grand projects—and the grandest of them all is Astana, his new capital city. Once an obscure fortress town of the Russian Empire, in a region where temperatures swing from 100° in the summer to -40° in the winter, Astana today is a fast-growing metropolis of 600,000—and a showcase for a staggering variety of public works. Billions of dollars are being poured into the construction of government buildings, museums, monuments, religious shrines, entertainment palaces, apartment blocks, and hospitals. Business barons and foreign governments, aware of Kazakhstan's growing importance as a global oil exporter, are courting Nazarbayev with generous contributions to Astana's development. To cite just a few examples: the Persian Gulf state of Qatar has funded a national Islamic center, with a mosque able to accommodate 7,000 worshippers; a Saudi prince's foundation has funded a center for cardiac surgery; and the Russian-Jewish oligarch Alexander Mashkevich, who has large metal holdings in Kazakhstan, has funded the Beit Rachel synagogue and Jewish center. Everyone, after all, is aware of the city's immense importance to Nazarbayev. "The heart of the nation now beats here," he informed his people in 1999, two years after officially uprooting the government from Almaty, its former seat, in the temperate south of the country.

Nazarbayev claims to be the planner of Astana's every detail, right down to the choice of yellow and white paints for the houses. There is no reason to doubt his obsession. On the ground floor of the presidential palace is an eye-catching scale model of the emerging capital. The model highlights the so-called "new city," on the left bank of the Ishim



Paul Starobin is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. His profile of Vladimir Putin appeared in the March issue.

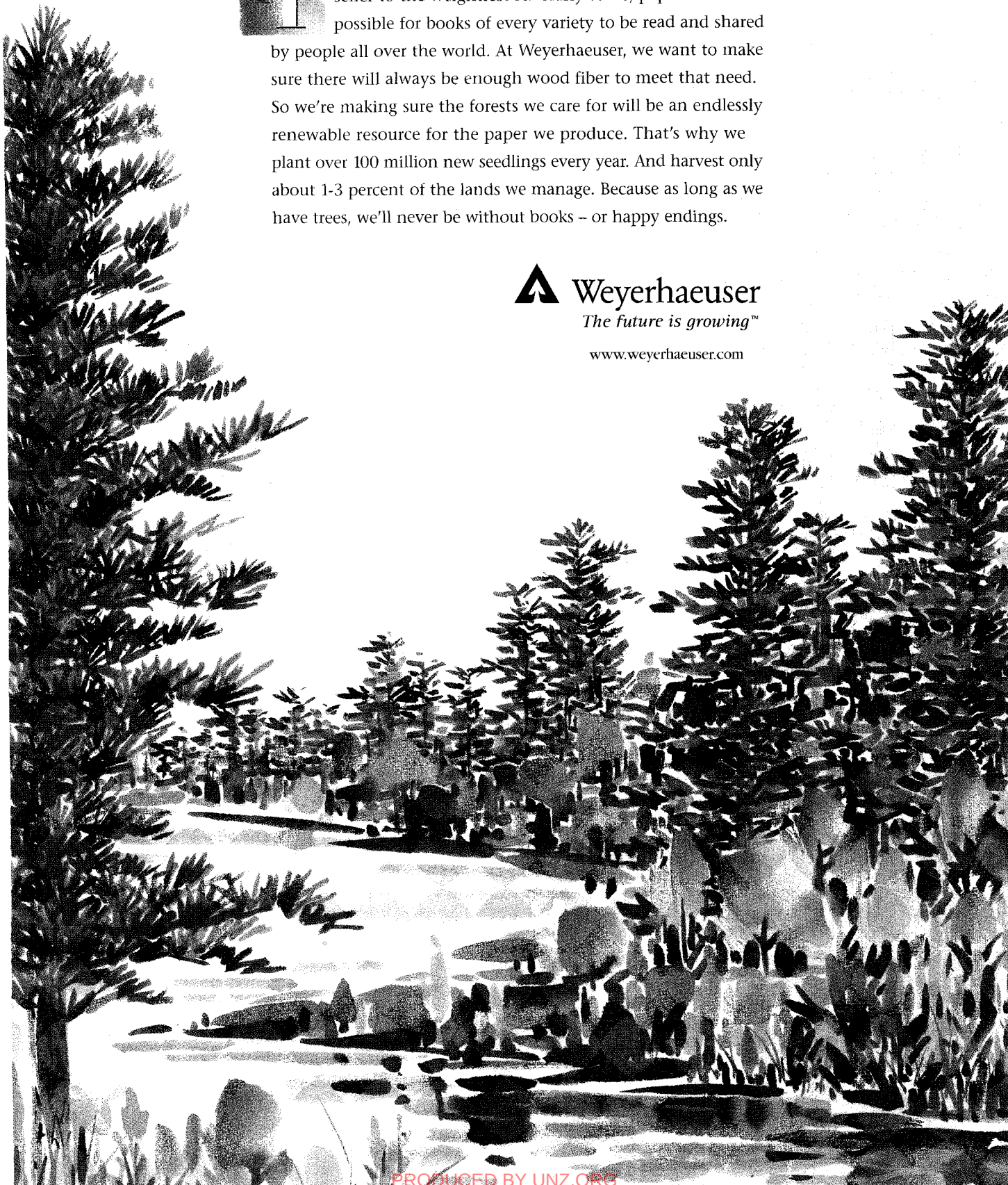
River. Important architects, including Lord Norman Foster, of London, are working on major commissions (Foster is building a glass-pyramid "Palace of Peace"), but Nazarbayev has made his own role in designing Astana clear. "I'm the architect," he once told a reporter, "and I am not ashamed to say that."

Considerable speculation attends the reasoning behind the move to Astana. Some Nazarbayev watchers say the main idea was to distance the seat of power from China, whose vast population inspires fear among the Kazakhs. Others say it was to establish the capital in an area populated by many ethnic Russians and close to the Russian border—thus checking any notions those citizens might have about breaking away to unite with Russia. My own hypothesis, born of several days' wandering around the place recently, is that Nazarbayev thinks of the city as a blank canvas.

No small measure of personal vanity attaches to this endeavor. Consider, for example, the Baiterek, an abstract-looking monument in the center of town. Designed to represent a tree of life planted in the heart of Eurasia, the monument has become the principal symbol of the new capital and the new country. A 1,000-ton trunk of white metal shoots up 344 feet from the ground and branches into limbs enmeshing a golden 300-ton glass ball seventy-two feet in diameter. Visitors can take an elevator to the top of the monument and into the ball, which affords a 360-degree panorama of the city's gleaming new structures (the massive, blue-domed presidential palace among them), vacant lots reserved for new buildings, and the steppe beyond. A plaque there is inscribed with wishes for world peace from the Chinese Taoist Association, the Muslim World League, and the

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Russian Orthodox Church, among other faith groups. But the main attraction is a silver mold of Nazarbayev's palm print. Placing a hand in it strikes up the Kazakh national anthem. Or at least it's supposed to. I tried but couldn't raise a note—a problem that, I was told, a visiting Gerhard Schröder had also had. At night the monument is lit up by pulsating mauve and turquoise lights.

The Baiterek seems right out of Architecture for Dictators 101—and there's no denying that Nazarbayev is a dictator, albeit of the soft variety. He has benefited from a regime-manufactured cult of personality since he became

"I'm the architect," Nazarbayev has said about his new capital city, Astana. The principal symbol of the city is a metal tree of life that shoots up 344 feet and enmeshes a 300-ton glass ball seventy-two feet in diameter.

president, in 1991, when Kazakhstan achieved its independence. Not surprisingly, both corruption and cronyism abound. That so many around the world are humoring his grandiosity is owing mainly to the country's impressive deposits of oil, which began to be developed intensively after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Western analysts are confident that the country will soon become one of the world's top oil exporters. "It is the real deal when it comes to oil," a senior U.S. diplomat in Kazakhstan told me.

"He thinks he is the Messiah," Zharmakhan Tuyakbay told me about Nazarbayev. Tuyakbay is one of the leaders of an elite opposition faction made up of Nazarbayev's former close associates, which aims to topple the regime, establish a Western-style parliamentary democracy, and, if popular support exists, return the capital to Almaty. (Most opposition leaders still live in Almaty or abroad, and detest Astana.) As for oil, the opposition hopes that it will be the president's undoing. James Giffen, a U.S. citizen and a consultant to the Kazakh regime, is awaiting trial in New York on federal charges of funneling more than \$84 million in kickbacks to three senior Kazakh officials, two of whom were subsequently named by prosecutors as Nazarbayev and the former prime minister Nurlan Balgimbaev. The indictment alleges that this money—which came from the purchase of Kazakhstani oil rights by certain Western oil companies in the 1990s—belongs to the government and people of Kazakhstan. The indictment also details the alleged transfer of funds into various Swiss bank accounts and alleges that millions of dollars were used to buy luxury items, including diamond jewelry. Opposition leaders are gearing up to use the Internet and all other available chan-

nels to publicize what they refer to, in PR-savvy style, as "Kazakh-gate."

A soft-spoken man in his late fifties, with a full head of steel-wool hair and a wardrobe of dark business suits, Tuyakbay impressed me as level-headed and resolute when we met for lunch at the Tabard Inn, in Washington, D.C. "The structure of power," he told me, "is totally corrupt."

Tuyakbay had come to town to attend a dinner of the International Republican Institute, a pro-democracy group chaired by Senator John McCain. McCain detests autocrats like Nazarbayev, as I learned when we discussed Kazakhstan. "Would I be glad if he were gone?" McCain said. "Yes." Later he elaborated on that thought. America, he said, "cannot support despotic governments and expect over time not to pay a heavy price." Kazakhstan's oil is no reason, he feels, to embrace the current regime. Bush has been reluctant to publicly criticize Nazarbayev's authoritarian bent—especially in light of Nazarbayev's commitment to ship oil by a Washington-favored pipeline route that skirts Russia and ends on the Turkish Mediterranean. But in a speech at the dinner Tuyakbay attended, Bush did sound a note of encouragement for the Kazakh opposition. "Across the Caucasus and Central Asia," he declared, "hope is stirring at the prospect of change—and change will come."

Perhaps it will: a Washington-applauded putsch recently removed the authoritarian leader of Kyrgyzstan, a neighbor of Kazakhstan and another former Soviet republic. The spark in Kazakhstan could come as soon as December, when Nazarbayev may be elected to another seven-year term—in a contest that is unlikely to be "free and fair."

What I discovered during my journey to Kazakhstan, however, is that the prospect of change has many ordinary folks there feeling nervous. I went in search of a despised dictator and instead found a tolerated one—in some quarters even a popular one.

Kazakhstan lies in the great Asian steppe. Its 15 million people are scattered across an expanse of territory as large as Western Europe, stretching from China in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west. By tradition the Kazakhs, a Turkic-Mongol people, are nomads, grouped in kinship clans and larger hordes. Islam arrived in the eighth century, but except in the less nomadic south it never inspired an especially fervent devotion. European culture and the Russian language (now universally spoken) came with the Russian colonial conquest, starting in the eighteenth century. Early in the Soviet period the Kazakhs endured a brutal series of Moscow-dictated transformations, including the collectivization of agriculture. Many Kazakhs, unwilling to become settled farmers, let their cattle perish. But they gradually accommodated themselves to Soviet rule and developed their own strong bench of party leaders.

Nazarbayev accepted and mastered the Soviet system. The son of ethnic Kazakh shepherds, he was born in July of



SHAMIL ZHUMATOV / REUTERS

1940, in a village in southeastern Kazakhstan, close to the border with Kyrgyzstan. After high school he joined tens of thousands of other *rabochiye*—manual workers conscripted by the Communist Party's economic planners—at an enormous steelworks in the republic's northern town of Temirtau. He began at the bottom, as an iron caster, gulping salt water to retain body fluids in the furnacelike conditions. He joined

Komsomol, the Communist Youth League, and proved adept at cultivating powerful patrons. By the time he left the area, in 1980, for a senior Party job in Almaty, he was well along the path to the top Party post of first secretary (reporting directly to Moscow), which he attained in 1989.

Some of his current rivals, educated at Moscow academies in economics or engineering (or trained by the KGB),

look down on Nazarbayev as crude and ignorant. They maintain that the public would be scandalized to know of his private antics. One opposition source, who told me that Nazarbayev is a binge drinker, claims to have seen him put away a quart and a half of vodka in a single day in the 1990s, but also admits, "I never saw him lose control." (Nazarbayev's personal physician told me the president's health is "very good.") Other opposition sources, in service of their point, supplied me with snapshots of Nazarbayev at a private party in Turkey in the mid-1990s, hosted by a Turkish construction magnate. In one of them Nazarbayev, attired in a white leisure suit, is tucking a wad of money into the brassiere strap of a belly dancer. In another he is handling a golden pistol—a gift, apparently, from the host.

To explain Nazarbayev's rise to the top, critics use the Russian word *hitryi*, which translates roughly as "tricky" or "cunning"—as in a fox. Stalin, too, was said to possess this trait. Even nonpartisans admit that Nazarbayev has a helpful, possibly instinctive plasticity. *Nursultan Nazarbayev*, a coffee-table book of photographs lovingly compiled by his press office, includes a reproduction of a painted Soviet-realist-style portrait that depicts him in a muslin blouse with sleeves rolled up, a sheaf of wheat on his lap. Another reproduced painting suggests a kind of modern Khan: he is shown in a suit and tie astride a black horse, a robe draped over his shoulders. Nazarbayev, nominally a Muslim, has made the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, in a nod to Islamic sensibilities, but his chosen image for Western consumption is that of an economic modernizer. To perfect that image he has sought advice from Michael Porter, a famous economic-development guru at the Harvard Business School. Porter flew to Kazakhstan last January for a three-hour lunch with Nazarbayev, punctuated by vodka toasts. "He really wants his country to be a success in a market economy," Porter told me, "and bristles at being compared with other leaders in the region." In the 1990s, because of Nazarbayev's unrelenting urging that his citizens make their own way on entrepreneurial initiative, Kazakhs nicknamed their leader "Bazaar-bayev."

In mid-June, a few days after arriving in Kazakhstan, I paid a visit to Temirtau, where Nazarbayev had worked as a youth. A yellowish, foul-smelling exhaust poured from the chimney stacks of the steelworks, which is now privately owned by Mittal, an international steel conglomerate. From the townspeople I learned of Temirtau's rough introduction to capitalist culture. The plant, which during peak Soviet times employed some 40,000 people, is down to a work force of about 25,000. The health of the workers, I was told, had declined with the end of the Soviet practice of sending *rabochiye* to special state-owned sanatoria for needed rest. Pollution from the plant was poisoning the water and spoiling the breast milk of new mothers. And because Kazakhstan has difficulty controlling its borders, Temirtau had become a transit point for smugglers mov-

ing narcotics along a route between the poppy fields of Afghanistan and the drug markets of Europe.

It all sounded dreadful. And yet the people of Temirtau seemed to blame not the Nazarbayev regime but the sudden and chaotic collapse of the Soviet system. Lyudmila Kurtavtseva, an environmental activist, told me that things were actually at their worst in 1996 and 1997; since then government initiatives to address pollution and other hazards have gradually improved living conditions. Outside the gates of the steelworks I chatted with Alex (he declined to give his last name), a twenty-five-year-old blond, blue-eyed Russian who grew up in Temirtau and now earns about \$150 a month as a mechanic at the works. His salary is not enough to live on, but Alex, who lives alone, gets financial help from his family. He folded a pair of well-muscled forearms across his bib overalls; his hands were caked with black soot. "Maybe Nazarbayev is one of the richest people in the world," Alex said, "but he cares about the people and does things for the country."

For reasons I could not pin down, it is said in Kazakhstan that Nazarbayev is the planet's tenth wealthiest man. If the state is rich with oil, people reason, then the head of state must be rich too.

Those sentiments were echoed on a visit to Chimkent, the main city in the impoverished rural region of southern Kazakhstan, from which Zharmakhan Tuyakbay hails. In the old quarter I met with Ziyatulla Madaliyev and Abdu-gani Baibulotov, a pair of Uzbek elders, at a modest private home shaded by an arbor of grapevines. Uzbeks have lived in Chimkent for centuries (present-day Uzbekistan is just a short drive away), and make up about 30 percent of the current population. They are also pillars of the local business establishment. Madaliyev poured out bowls of hot tea, and we nibbled from trays of candies, nuts, and dried apricots. I turned the conversation to politics. "We would prefer for Nazarbayev to stay for another seven years—in fact, for as long as he is living," Madaliyev told me. "If there is a new president, he will not stop stealing until his pockets are full." This was an idea I heard repeatedly: Nazarbayev and his cronies are already so wealthy that their appetite for money has been sated.

It seemed plain that the opposition's call for Western-style political reforms was not a burning issue for these people. If their political liberties were restricted, others remained untrammelled. Baibulotov told me that he goes to the neighborhood mosque every Friday. The mosque is 300 years old, he said, and has survived the Bolshevik Revolution and all other onslaughts. And these days, he said, it is thriving; 80 percent of the people there on Fridays are young men. In neighboring Uzbekistan a more repressive ruler, Islam Karimov, enforces tight restrictions on religious activity and consequently faces a grassroots revolt urged by Islamic militants. Life is better here in Kazakhstan, the elders told me.

For a decidedly unofficial view of Nazarbayev, I made secret arrangements to meet Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, Kazakhstan's most famous political prisoner. With the help of an opposition activist living outside Kazakhstan, I met up in Astana with Zhakiyanov's son, Berik, for a drive to the Shiderty prison colony, two hours east of the capital. A student at the University of Texas in Austin, Berik had rented a cottage near the prison gates in order to spend summer time with his father as prison rules permitted. My subterfuge was necessary because Zhakiyanov had not asked the authorities for permission to give an interview, fearing that it wouldn't be granted.

As we drove out on the highway toward Shiderty in a Toyota Camry, the white seedling strands of the *kovyl'* steppe grass suggested a carpet of snow. Cowboys on small chestnut horses tended cattle. Eventually the Toyota veered left at a grove of white birch trees and sped past a coal mine. Berik told me to duck down. We halted at his cottage, and I was hustled through the door into a room decorated in the fashion of a yurt, the felt tent traditionally used by Kazakh nomads. The floor and walls were covered by carpets, and in the middle was a low round table.

For reasons I could not pin down, it is said in Kazakhstan that Nazarbayev is the planet's tenth wealthiest man. If the state is rich with oil, people reason, then the head of state must be rich too.

In walked Zhakiyanov, a slight man wearing eyeglasses, a sports shirt, and blue jeans. An ethnic Kazakh born in 1963, Zhakiyanov was an up-and-coming provincial governor in the early years of Kazakhstan's independence but was dismissed after helping found Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, a reform-oriented group that criticized state power as excessively centralized—and demanded an explanation of Nazarbayev's holdings in foreign bank accounts. A criminal investigation was conducted of Zhakiyanov's alleged misdeeds as governor, and in 2002 a court handed down a seven-year sentence for "abuse of office" and related financial crimes. "The real reason for his imprisonment," Amnesty International states in its most recent report on Kazakhstan, "appeared to be his peaceful opposition activities."

The Shiderty colony is located in prime Soviet-gulag territory: Solzhenitsyn did time at a camp in the area in the 1950s. But Zhakiyanov acknowledged that Shiderty, a low-security center, is not a great hardship. He works at a horse farm, milking mares to produce *kumys*, a fermented beverage much enjoyed by Kazakhs.

A cook set on the table a steaming platter of *besbarmak*, a Kazakh national dish of lamb chunks boiled in broth and ladled over large, flat squares of pasta. It was delicious. We sipped tea from bowls as we sat, in a concession to me, on small chairs instead of on the carpet. I shifted the discussion to Nazarbayev. "Yes, he has a good survival instinct," Zhakiyanov said, "but he doesn't have any strategic plan. He can't see further than his own nose. If he was thinking strategically, he would be doing political reforms."

Zhakiyanov was poring over the *Federalist Papers*, on his son's recommendation. "The danger in Kazakhstan is instability of the political system," he said. He set an empty plate on the table and stacked three apples. He gave the plate a little shake, and the apples toppled. That's Nazarbayev's "*vertikal' vlasti*," he said—his top-down hierarchy of power. He then rearranged the apples, putting a big one in the middle of the plate and ringing it with several smaller ones. He shook the plate again, and nothing moved. This is how it should be, he said: a president in the middle, surrounded by members of a genuine parliament. "Our opposition is not one person but one idea," he said. "No more *vertikal' vlasti*." So Zhakiyanov and other opposition leaders pledge to amend the country's constitution to limit the president to a single term in office.

"There is no question this transformation will happen," Zhakiyanov said. "The question is how peacefully it occurs."

The week after my interview with Zhakiyanov, I encountered President Nazarbayev at a dinner in Almaty that he gave to open a business conference in town sponsored by the New York-based Asia Society. The tables were laid with platters of smoked fish and bowls of black caviar; white-gloved waitresses poured vodka into small goblets. Richard Holbrooke, a veteran U.S. diplomat and the chairman of the Asia Society, was seated directly across from Nazarbayev. Holbrooke motioned toward him and suggested I go over and introduce myself.

This conversation, I sensed, would be short. Deciding not to mention my unauthorized visit with Zhakiyanov, I told Nazarbayev about my lunch with Zharmakhan Tuyakbay in Washington. Mr. President, I said, the opposition is saying that you have been in power too long, and that the time has come to go. Nazarbayev fastened his large brown eyes on me. "Did you know," he asked, "that Mr. Tuyakbay was the general prosecutor during Soviet times, and he jailed many dissidents?" He shifted his gaze to someone else who wanted to talk to him. I had in effect been dismissed.

Nazarbayev was in his element, surrounded by his closest backers. I chatted briefly with one of the head-table guests, Alexander Mashkevich, the funder of the Beit Rachel synagogue, who holds the title of president of the Jewish Congress of Kazakhstan. Opposition leaders have him in their sights: his holdings in Kazakhstan are sure

to be scrutinized avidly if Nazarbayev falls from power. But Mashkevich is viewed as a crucial ally by the country's Jewish leaders, who are struggling to rebuild their community. "We like his good relationship with the government," Yeshaya Cohen, a rabbi at Beit Rachel, told me. Cohen met Mashkevich back in the 1990s, when, he said, he found the businessman stuffing \$50 bills into the charity box of a synagogue in Almaty. Another contribution, an envelope stuffed with \$50,000 in cash, followed. Beit Rachel itself cost Mashkevich about \$2.5 million, Cohen told me.

In an interview at the presidential palace in Astana, Makhmud Kasymbekov, a top Nazarbayev aide, dismissed the opposition leaders' vow to end the system of crony politics in Kazakhstan. "Just get them a tasty pie and a good position," he said, "like mayor of a city, and they will forget about all their opposition views."

And yet surely the palace must be anxious. The list of Nazarbayev's once trusted associates who are now out of office and openly in opposition includes, in addition to Tuyakbay and Zhakiyanov, a former prime minister, a former minister of emergency situations, a former central-bank chief, and a former ambassador to Moscow. In Almaty a former counterintelligence official for the regime told me that Nazarbayev could not count on the loyalty of the security services. The loyalties of others in the political and business elites are also up for grabs; I know of one prominent businessman who is simultaneously encouraging the opposition and courting the regime. The opposition is amply funded by sources that include the former prime minister, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who made a fortune in the waning days of the Soviet Union by exporting pharmaceutical chemicals to the West at prices of up to twenty times his costs. Kazhegeldin lives a moneyed if restless life in Europe, skipping from capital to capital. "Sometimes at night I dream I am back at the center of things," he told me when I met him recently.

I had a long talk about the situation with Dariga Nazarbayeva, the president's oldest daughter, who has founded a national television channel and is herself active in politics. We chatted at a café at the Ankara, a five-star hotel in Almaty. Nursing a sore throat, she sipped from a cup of green tea into which she deposited spoonfuls of honey. She was smartly dressed in an orange-and-turquoise blazer over a turquoise jersey and white slacks.

A Kazakh newspaper had recently reported that Nazarbayeva believed a putsch against the president, like the one in Kyrgyzstan, was possible in Kazakhstan. I asked her to elaborate. "This is possible everywhere now," she said—not because of grassroots discontent with her father but because Western-aided NGOs and small elites with money and the help of modern media technologies can create a kind of false revolutionary situation. "We have to be more active to avoid this," she said. To that end her father is crafting laws to restrict the activities in Kazakhstan of

the International Republican Institute and other Western pro-democracy groups.

Nazarbayeva portrays herself as a political progressive. She conceded that "some people around my father don't want to see power devolved" and that this stance is in the long run an obstacle to "political modernization." As for the criticism that the president's family had in effect hijacked the national economy: "It's a lie." (Nazarbayev himself has dismissed the charges against the consultant James Giffen as "baseless," and denies any personal role in that scandal.)

I gained from her a sharp impression of just how personal and intimate elite politics is in Kazakhstan. Everyone knows everyone else; her children are close friends with the children of a leading opposition figure. She switched from English to Russian to deliver her most emotive points and concluded our talk with a wail against Tuyakbay and his brethren: "*Pochemu, pochemu, oni begayut v Washington?*" ("Why, why, do they run to Washington?")

Dariga Nazarbayeva is probably right about one thing. If the revolution comes to Kazakhstan, it will be a revolution of the elite, masterminded by Western-oriented activists—some more scrupulous than others—with tight ties to power brokers in Washington, the imperial capital. Such an upheaval might well turn out to be a step forward for global democracy. Still, it is a curious kind of democratic movement that has as its mainspring not "the people" but a selected clique. I gave my estimation of the popular mood to one opposition activist. "Since when," he said, "have the people of Kazakhstan decided anything?"

At issue in vulnerable places like Kazakhstan—for the first time in centuries, the protagonist of its own history—is a question of power. Who gets to write the next chapter of the tale, and the one after that?

In his resolve to remain the story's author, Nazarbayev attends to the public in the way he knows best. Soon after the coup in Kyrgyzstan he announced a 32 percent wage hike for government workers. At the new cardiac center in Astana, the most modern of its kind in Central Asia, more than 650 people have received open-heart surgery. And for the plebeians in his model capital city Nazarbayev is delivering not just bread—and health care—but circuses, too.

Early on a Friday evening I crowded into a stadium with thousands of others for a celebration of the capital's eighth birthday. Hoofbeats sounded the entry of stallions, astride which young men in crimson costumes performed daredevil stunts. Scores of comely young women resplendent in folk garb marched in. There were jugglers and elephants—and a small boy who managed to walk upside down on his hands for at least fifty yards. Halfway through the ceremonies the performers turned and faced Nazarbayev, who was seated in a box in the middle of the grandstand. They took up a chant:

"Astana, Kazakhstan, Nursultan, our homeland!"

Nazarbayev stood and waved. And the crowd roared. ■

Despite the vast number of religions, nearly everyone in the world believes in the same things: the existence of a soul, an afterlife, miracles, and the divine creation of the universe. Recently psychologists doing research on the minds of infants have discovered two related facts that may account for this phenomenon. One: human beings come into the world with a predisposition to believe in supernatural phenomena. And two: this predisposition is an incidental by-product of cognitive functioning gone awry. Which leads to the question ...

IS GOD AN ACCIDENT?

BY PAUL BLOOM

Illustrations by Greg Clarke

I. GOD IS NOT DEAD

When I was a teenager my rabbi believed that the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who was living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, was the Messiah, and that the world was soon to end. He believed that the earth was a few thousand years old, and that the fossil record was a consequence of the Great Flood. He could describe the afterlife, and was able to answer adolescent questions about the fate of Hitler's soul.

My rabbi was no crackpot; he was an intelligent and amiable man, a teacher and a scholar. But he held views that struck me as strange, even disturbing. Like many secular people, I am comfortable with religion as a source of spirituality and transcendence, tolerance and love, charity and good works. Who can object to the faith of Martin Luther King Jr. or the Dalai Lama—at least as long as that faith grounds moral positions one already accepts? I am uncomfortable, however, with religion when it makes claims about the natural world, let alone a world beyond nature. It is easy for those of us who reject supernatural beliefs to agree with Stephen Jay Gould that the best way to accord dignity and respect to both science and religion is to recognize that they apply to “non-overlapping



Paul Bloom, a professor of psychology and linguistics at Yale, is the author of Descartes' Baby: How the Science of Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human and How Children Learn the Meanings of Words.

magisteria”: science gets the realm of facts, religion the realm of values.

For better or worse, though, religion is much more than a set of ethical principles or a vague sense of transcendence. The anthropologist Edward Tylor got it right in 1871, when he noted that the “minimum definition of religion” is a

belief in spiritual beings, in the supernatural. My rabbi's specific claims were a minority view in the culture in which I was raised, but those *sorts* of views—about the creation of the universe, the end of the world, the fates of souls—define religion as billions of people understand and practice it.

The United States is a poster child for supernatural belief. Just about everyone in this country—96 percent in one poll—believes in God. Well over half of Americans believe in miracles, the devil, and angels. Most believe in an afterlife—and not just in the mushy sense that we will

live on in the memories of other people, or in our good deeds; when asked for details, most Americans say they believe that after death they will actually reunite with relatives and get to meet God. Woody Allen once said, “I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.” Most Americans have precisely this expectation.

But America is an anomaly, isn't it? These statistics are sometimes taken as yet another indication of how much this country differs from, for instance, France and Germany, where secularism holds greater sway. Americans are fundamentalists, the claim goes, isolated from the intellectual progress made by the rest of the world.

There are two things wrong with this conclusion. First, even if a gap between America and Europe exists, it is not the United States that is idiosyncratic. After all, the rest of the world—Asia, Africa, the Middle East—is not exactly filled with hard-core atheists. If one is to talk about exceptionalism, it applies to Europe, not the United States.

Second, the religious divide between Americans and Europeans may be smaller than we think. The sociologists Rodney Stark, of Baylor University, and Roger Finke, of Pennsylvania State University, write that the big difference has to do with church attendance, which really is much lower in Europe. (Building on the work of the Chicago-based sociologist and priest Andrew Greeley, they argue that this is because the United States has a rigorously free religious market, in which churches actively vie for parishioners and constantly improve their product, whereas European churches are often under state control and, like many government monopolies, have become inefficient.) Most polls from European countries show that a majority of their people are believers. Consider Iceland. To judge by rates of churchgoing, Iceland is the most secular country on earth, with a pathetic two percent weekly attendance. But four out of five Icelanders say that they pray, and the same proportion believe in life after death.

In the United States some liberal scholars posit a different sort of exceptionalism, arguing that belief in the supernatural is found mostly in Christian conservatives—those infamously described by the *Washington Post* reporter Michael Weisskopf in 1993 as “largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command.” Many people saw the 2004 presidential election as pitting Americans who are religious against those who are not.

An article by Steven Waldman in the online magazine *Slate* provides some perspective on the divide:

As you may already know, one of America's two political parties is extremely religious. Sixty-one percent of this party's voters say they pray daily or more often. An astounding 92 percent of them believe in life after death. And there's a hard-core subgroup in this party of super-religious Christian zealots. Very conservative on gay marriage, half of the members of this subgroup believe Bush uses too *little* religious rhetoric, and 51 percent of them

believe God gave Israel to the Jews and that its existence fulfills the prophecy about the second coming of Jesus.

The group that Waldman is talking about is Democrats; the hard-core subgroup is African-American Democrats.

Finally, consider scientists. They are less likely than non-scientists to be religious—but not by a huge amount. A 1996 poll asked scientists whether they believed in God, and the pollsters set the bar high—no mealy-mouthed evasions such as “I believe in the totality of all that exists” or “in what is beautiful and unknown”; rather, they insisted on a real biblical God, one believers could pray to and actually get an answer from. About 40 percent of scientists said yes to a belief in this kind of God—about the same percentage found in a similar poll in 1916. Only when we look at the most elite scientists—members of the National Academy of Sciences—do we find a strong majority of atheists and agnostics.

These facts are an embarrassment for those who see supernatural beliefs as a cultural anachronism, soon to be eroded by scientific discoveries and the spread of cosmopolitan values. They require a new theory of why we are religious—one that draws on research in evolutionary biology, cognitive neuroscience, and developmental psychology.

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II. OPIATES AND FRATERNITIES

One traditional approach to the origin of religious belief begins with the observation that it is difficult to

be a person. There is evil all around; everyone we love will die; and soon we ourselves will die—either slowly and probably unpleasantly or quickly and probably unpleasantly. For all but a pampered and lucky few life really is nasty, brutish, and short. And if our lives have some greater meaning, it is hardly obvious.

So perhaps, as Marx suggested, we have adopted religion as an opiate, to soothe the pain of existence. As the philosopher Susanne K. Langer has put it, man “cannot deal with Chaos”; supernatural beliefs solve the problem of this chaos by providing meaning. We are not mere things; we are lovingly crafted by God, and serve his purposes. Religion tells us that this is a just world, in which the good will be rewarded and the evil punished. Most of all, it addresses our fear of death. Freud summed it all up by describing a “three-fold task” for religious beliefs: “they must exorcise the terrors of nature, they must reconcile men to the cruelty of Fate, particularly as it is shown in death, and they must compensate them for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them.”

Religions can sometimes do all these things, and it would be unrealistic to deny that this partly explains their existence. Indeed, sometimes theologians use the foregoing arguments to make a case for why we should believe: if one wishes for purpose, meaning, and eternal life, there is nowhere to go but toward God.

One problem with this view is that, as the cognitive scientist Steven Pinker reminds us, we don't typically get solace from propositions that we don't already believe to be true. Hungry people don't cheer themselves up by believing that they just had a large meal. Heaven is a reassuring notion only insofar as people believe such a place exists; it is this belief that an adequate theory of religion has to explain in the first place.

Also, the religion-as-opiate theory fits best with the monotheistic religions most familiar to us. But what about those people (many of the religious people in the world) who do not believe in an all-wise and just God? Every society believes in spiritual beings, but they are often stupid or malevolent. Many religions simply don't deal with metaphysical or teleological questions; gods and ancestor spirits are called upon only to help cope with such mundane problems as how to prepare food and what to do with a corpse—not to elucidate the Meaning of It All. As for the reassurance of heaven, justice, or salvation, again, it exists in some religions but by no means all. (In fact, even those religions we are most familiar with are not always reassuring. I know some older Christians who were made miserable as children by worries about eternal damnation; the prospect of oblivion would have been far preferable.) So the opiate theory is ultimately an unsatisfying explanation for the existence of religion.

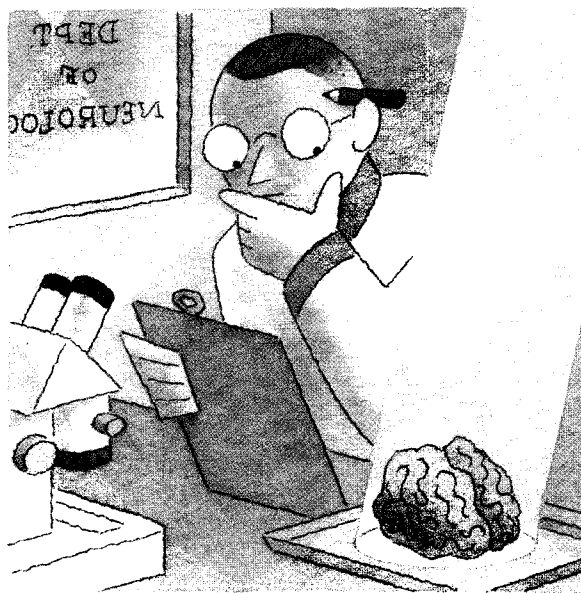
The major alternative theory is social: religion brings people together, giving them an edge over those who lack this social glue. Sometimes this argument is presented in cultural terms, and sometimes it is seen from an evolutionary perspective: survival of the fittest working at the level not of the gene or the individual but of the social group. In either case the claim is that religion thrives because groups that have it outgrow and outlast those that do not.

In this conception religion is a fraternity, and the analogy runs deep. Just as fraternities used to paddle freshmen on the rear end to instill loyalty and commitment, religions

have painful initiation rites—for example, snipping off part of the penis. Also, certain puzzling features of many religions, such as dietary restrictions and distinctive dress, make perfect sense once they are viewed as tools to ensure group solidarity.

The fraternity theory also explains why religions are so harsh toward those who do not share the faith, reserving particular ire for apostates. This is clear in the Old Testament, in which “a jealous God” issues commands such as

Should your brother, your mother's son, or your son or your daughter or the wife of your bosom or your companion who is like your own self incite you in secret, saying 'Let us go and worship other gods' ... you shall surely kill him. Your hand shall be against him first to put him to death and the hand of all the people last. And you shall stone him and he shall die, for he sought to thrust you away from the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves.
—Deuteronomy 13, 7–11



This theory explains almost everything about religion—except the religious part. It is clear that rituals and sacrifices can bring people together, and it may well be that a group that does such things has an advantage over one that does not. But it is not clear why a *religion* has to be involved. Why are gods, souls, an afterlife, miracles, divine creation of the universe, and so on brought in? The theory doesn't explain what we are

most interested in, which is belief in the supernatural.

III. BODIES AND SOULS

Enthusiasm is building among scientists for a quite different view—that religion emerged not to serve a purpose but by accident.

This is not a value judgment. Many of the good things in life are, from an evolutionary perspective, accidents. People sometimes give money, time, and even blood to help unknown strangers in faraway countries whom they will never see. From the perspective of one's genes this is disastrous—the suicidal squandering of resources for no benefit. But its origin is not magical; long-distance altruism is most likely a by-product of other, more adaptive traits, such as empathy and abstract reasoning. Similarly, there is no reproductive advantage to the pleasure we get from paintings or movies. It just so happens that our eyes and brains, which evolved to react to three-dimensional objects

in the real world, can respond to two-dimensional projections on a canvas or a screen.

Supernatural beliefs might be explained in a similar way. This is the religion-as-accident theory that emerges from my work and the work of cognitive scientists such as Scott Atran, Pascal Boyer, Justin Barrett, and Deborah Kelemen. One version of this theory begins with the notion that a distinction between the physical and the psychological is fundamental to human thought. Purely physical things, such as rocks and trees, are subject to the pitiless laws of Newton. Throw a rock, and it will fly through space on a certain path; if you put a branch on the ground, it will not disappear, scamper away, or fly into space. Psychological things, such as people, possess minds, intentions, beliefs, goals, and desires. They move unexpectedly, according to volition and whim; they can chase or run away. There is a moral difference as well: a rock cannot be evil or kind; a person can.

Where does the distinction between the physical and the psychological come from? Is it something we learn through experience, or is it somehow prewired into our brains? One way to find out is to study babies. It is notoriously difficult to know what babies are thinking, given that they can't speak and have little control over their bodies. (They are harder to test than rats or pigeons, because they cannot run mazes or peck levers.) But recently investigators have used the technique of showing them different events and recording how long they look at them, exploiting the fact that babies, like the rest of us, tend to look longer at something they find unusual or bizarre.

This has led to a series of striking discoveries. Six-month-olds understand that physical objects obey gravity. If you put an object on a table and then remove the table, and the object just stays there (held by a hidden wire), babies are surprised; they expect the object to fall. They expect objects to be solid, and contrary to what is still being taught in some psychology classes, they understand that objects persist over time even if hidden. (Show a baby an object and then put it behind a screen. Wait a little while and then remove the screen. If the object is gone, the baby is surprised.) Five-month-olds can even do simple math, appreciating that if first one object and then another is placed behind a screen, when the screen drops there should be two objects, not one or three. Other experiments find the same numerical understanding in nonhuman primates, including macaques and tamarins, and in dogs.

Similarly precocious capacities show up in infants'

understanding of the social world. Newborns prefer to look at faces over anything else, and the sounds they most like to hear are human voices—preferably their mothers'. They quickly come to recognize different emotions, such as anger, fear, and happiness, and respond appropriately to them. Before they are a year old they can determine the target of an adult's gaze, and can learn by attending to the emotions of others; if a baby is crawling toward an area that might be dangerous and an adult makes a horrified or disgusted face, the baby usually knows enough to stay away.

A skeptic might argue that these social capacities can be explained as a set of primitive responses, but there is some evidence that they reflect a deeper understanding. For instance, when twelve-month-olds see one object chasing another, they seem to understand that it really is chasing, with the goal of catching; they expect the chaser to continue its pursuit along the most direct path, and are

surprised when it does otherwise. In some work I've done with the psychologists Valerie Kuhlmeier, of Queen's University, and Karen Wynn, of Yale, we found that when babies see one character in a movie help an individual and a different character hurt that individual, they later expect the individual to approach the character that helped it and to avoid the one that hurt it.

Understanding of the physical world and understanding of the social world can be seen as akin to two distinct computers in a baby's brain, running separate programs

and performing separate tasks. The understandings develop at different rates: the social one emerges somewhat later than the physical one. They evolved at different points in our prehistory; our physical understanding is shared by many species, whereas our social understanding is a relatively recent adaptation, and in some regards might be uniquely human.

That these two systems are distinct is especially apparent in autism, a developmental disorder whose dominant feature is a lack of social understanding. Children with autism typically show impairments in communication (about a third do not speak at all), in imagination (they tend not to engage in imaginative play), and most of all in socialization. They do not seem to enjoy the company of others; they don't hug; they are hard to reach out to. In the most extreme cases children with autism see people as nothing more than objects—objects that move in unpredictable ways and make unexpected noises and are therefore frightening. Their understanding of other minds is

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impaired, though their understanding of material objects is fully intact.

At this point the religion-as-accident theory says nothing about supernatural beliefs. Babies have two systems that work in a cold-bloodedly rational way to help them anticipate and understand—and, when they get older, to manipulate—physical and social entities. In other words, both these systems are biological adaptations that give human beings a badly needed head start in dealing with objects and people. But these systems go awry in two important ways that are the foundations of religion. First, we perceive the world of objects as essentially separate from the world of minds, making it possible for us to envision soulless bodies and bodiless souls. This helps explain why we believe in gods and an afterlife. Second, as we will see, our system of social understanding overshoots, inferring goals and desires where none exist. This makes us animists and creationists.

IV. NATURAL-BORN DUALISTS

For those of us who are not autistic, the separateness of these two mechanisms, one for understanding the physical world and one for understanding the social world, gives rise to a duality of experience. We experience the world of material things as separate from the world of goals and desires. The biggest consequence has to do with the way we think of ourselves and others. We are dualists; it seems intuitively obvious that a physical body and a conscious entity—a mind or soul—are genuinely distinct. We don't feel that we *are* our bodies. Rather, we feel that we *occupy* them, we *possess* them, we *own* them.

This duality is immediately apparent in our imaginative life. Because we see people as separate from their bodies, we easily understand situations in which people's bodies are radically changed while their personhood stays intact. Kafka envisioned a man transformed into a gigantic insect; Homer described the plight of men transformed into pigs; in *Shrek 2* an ogre is transformed into a human being, and a donkey into a steed; in *Star Trek* a scheming villain forcibly occupies Captain Kirk's body so as to take command of the *Enterprise*; in *The Tale of the Body Thief*, Anne Rice tells of a vampire and a human being who agree to trade bodies for a day; and in *13 Going on 30* a teenager wakes up as thirty-year-old Jennifer Garner. We don't think of these events as real, of course, but they are fully understandable; it makes intuitive sense to us that people can be separated

from their bodies, and similar transformations show up in religions around the world.

This notion of an immaterial soul potentially separable from the body clashes starkly with the scientific view. For psychologists and neuroscientists, the brain is the source of mental life; our consciousness, emotions, and will are the products of neural processes. As the claim is sometimes put, *The mind is what the brain does*. I don't want to overstate the consensus here; there is no accepted theory as to precisely how this happens, and some scholars are skeptical that we will ever develop such a theory. But no scientist takes seriously Cartesian dualism, which posits that thinking need not involve the brain. There is just too much evidence against it.

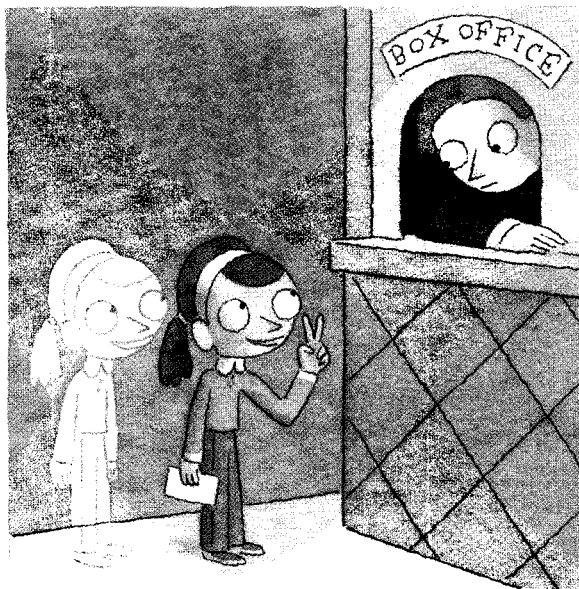
Still, it *feels* right, even to those who have never had religious training, and even to young children. This became particularly clear to me one night when I was arguing with

my six-year-old son, Max. I was telling him that he had to go to bed, and he said, "You can make me go to bed, but you can't make me go to sleep. It's *my* brain!" This piqued my interest, so I began to ask him questions about what the brain does and does not do. His answers showed an interesting split. He insisted that the brain was involved in perception—in seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling—and he was adamant that it was responsible for thinking. But, he said, the brain was not essential for dreaming, for feeling sad, or for loving his

brother. "That's what *I* do," Max said, "though my brain might help me out."

Max is not unusual. Children in our culture are taught that the brain is involved in thinking, but they interpret this in a narrow sense, as referring to conscious problem solving, academic rumination. They do not see the brain as the source of conscious experience; they do not identify it with their selves. They appear to think of it as a cognitive prosthesis—there is Max the person, and then there is his brain, which he uses to solve problems just as he might use a computer. In this commonsense conception the brain is, as Steven Pinker puts it, "a pocket PC for the soul."

If bodies and souls are thought of as separate, there can be bodies without souls. A corpse is seen as a body that used to have a soul. Most things—chairs, cups, trees—never had souls; they never had will or consciousness. At least some nonhuman animals are seen in the same way,



as what Descartes described as “beast-machines,” or complex automata. Some artificial creatures, such as industrial robots, Haitian zombies, and Jewish golems, are also seen as soulless beings, lacking free will or moral feeling.

Then there are souls without bodies. Most people I know believe in a God who created the universe, performs miracles, and listens to prayers. He is omnipotent and omniscient, possessing infinite kindness, justice, and mercy. But he does not in any literal sense have a body. Some people also believe in lesser noncorporeal beings that can temporarily take physical form or occupy human beings or animals: examples include angels, ghosts, poltergeists, succubi, dybbuks, and the demons that Jesus so frequently expelled from people’s bodies.

This belief system opens the possibility that we ourselves can survive the death of our bodies. Most people believe that when the body is destroyed, the soul lives on. It might ascend to heaven, descend to hell, go off into some sort of parallel world, or occupy some other body, human or animal. Indeed, the belief that the world teems with ancestor spirits—the souls of people who have been liberated from their bodies through death—is common across cultures. We can imagine our bodies being destroyed, our brains ceasing to function, our bones turning to dust, but it is harder—some would say impossible—to imagine the end of our very existence. The notion of a soul without a body makes sense to us.

Others have argued that rather than believing in an afterlife because we are dualists, we are dualists because we want to believe in an afterlife. This was Freud’s position. He speculated that the “doctrine of the soul” emerged as a solution to the problem of death: if souls exist, then conscious experience need not come to an end. Or perhaps the motivation for belief in an afterlife is cultural: we believe it because religious authorities tell us that it is so, possibly because it serves the interests of powerful leaders to control the masses through the carrot of heaven and the stick of hell. But there is reason to favor the religion-as-accident theory.

In a significant study the psychologists Jesse Bering, of the University of Arkansas, and David Bjorklund, of Florida Atlantic University, told young children a story about an alligator and a mouse, complete with a series of pictures, that ended in tragedy: “Uh oh! Mr. Alligator sees Brown Mouse and is coming to get him!” [The children were shown a picture of the alligator eating the mouse.] “Well, it looks like Brown Mouse got eaten by Mr. Alligator. Brown Mouse is not alive anymore.”

The experimenters asked the children a set of questions about the mouse’s biological functioning—such as “Now that the mouse is no longer alive, will he ever need to go to the bathroom? Do his ears still work? Does his brain still work?”—and about the mouse’s mental functioning, such as “Now that the mouse is no longer alive, is he still hungry? Is he thinking about the alligator? Does he still want to go home?”

As predicted, when asked about biological properties, the children appreciated the effects of death: no need for bathroom breaks; the ears don’t work, and neither does the brain. The mouse’s body is gone. But when asked about the psychological properties, more than half the children said that these would continue: the dead mouse can feel hunger, think thoughts, and have desires. The soul survives. And *children believe this more than adults do*, suggesting that although we have to learn which specific afterlife people in our culture believe in (heaven, reincarnation, a spirit world, and so on), the notion that life after death is possible is not learned at all. It is a by-product of how we naturally think about the world.

V. WE’VE EVOLVED TO BE CREATIONISTS

This is just half the story. Our dualism makes it possible for us to think of supernatural entities and events; it is why such things make sense. But there is another factor that makes the perception of them compelling, often irresistible. We have what the anthropologist

Pascal Boyer has called a hypertrophy of social cognition. We see purpose, intention, design, even when it is not there.

In 1944 the social psychologists Fritz Heider and Mary-Ann Simmel made a simple movie in which geometric figures—circles, squares, triangles—moved in certain systematic ways, designed to tell a tale. When shown this movie, people instinctively describe the figures as if they were specific types of people (bullies, victims, heroes) with goals and desires, and repeat pretty much the same story that the psychologists intended to tell. Further research has found that bounded figures aren’t even necessary—one can get much the same effect in movies where the “characters” are not single objects but moving groups, such as swarms of tiny squares.

Stewart Guthrie, an anthropologist at Fordham University, was the first modern scholar to notice the importance of this tendency as an explanation for religious thought. In his book *Faces in the Clouds*, Guthrie presents

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anecdotes and experiments showing that people attribute human characteristics to a striking range of real-world entities, including bicycles, bottles, clouds, fire, leaves, rain, volcanoes, and wind. We are hypersensitive to signs of agency—so much so that we see intention where only artifice or accident exists. As Guthrie puts it, the clothes have no emperor.

Our quickness to over-read purpose into things extends to the perception of intentional design. People have a terrible eye for randomness. If you show them a string of heads and tails that was produced by a random-number generator, they tend to think it is rigged—it looks orderly to them, too orderly. After 9/11 people claimed to see Satan in the billowing smoke from the World Trade Center. Before that some people were stirred by the Nun Bun, a baked good that bore an eerie resemblance to Mother Teresa. In November of 2004 someone posted on eBay a ten-year-old grilled cheese sandwich that looked remarkably like the Virgin Mary; it sold for \$28,000. (In response pranksters posted a grilled cheese sandwich bearing images of the Olsen twins, Mary-Kate and Ashley.) There are those who listen to the static from radios and other electronic devices and hear messages from dead people—a phenomenon presented with great seriousness in the Michael Keaton movie *White Noise*. Older readers who lived their formative years before CDs and MPEGs might remember listening intently for the significant and sometimes scatological messages that were said to come from records played backward.

Sometimes there really are signs of nonrandom and functional design. We are not being unreasonable when we observe that the eye seems to be crafted for seeing, or that the leaf insect seems colored with the goal of looking very much like a leaf. The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins begins *The Blind Watchmaker* by conceding this point: “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.” Dawkins goes on to suggest that anyone before Darwin who did not believe in God was simply not paying attention.

Darwin changed everything. His great insight was that one could explain complex and adaptive design without positing a divine designer. Natural selection can be simulated on a computer; in fact, genetic algorithms, which mimic natural selection, are used to solve otherwise intrac-

table computational problems. And we can see natural selection at work in case studies across the world, from the evolution of beak size in Galápagos finches to the arms race we engage in with many viruses, which have an unfortunate capacity to respond adaptively to vaccines.

Richard Dawkins may well be right when he describes the theory of natural selection as one of our species’ finest accomplishments; it is an intellectually satisfying and empirically supported account of our own existence. But almost nobody believes it. One poll found that more than a third of college undergraduates believe that the Garden of Eden was where the first human beings appeared. And even among those who claim to endorse Darwinian evolution, many distort it in one way or another, often seeing it as a mysterious internal force driving species toward perfection. (Dawkins writes that it appears almost as if “the human brain is specifically designed to misunderstand

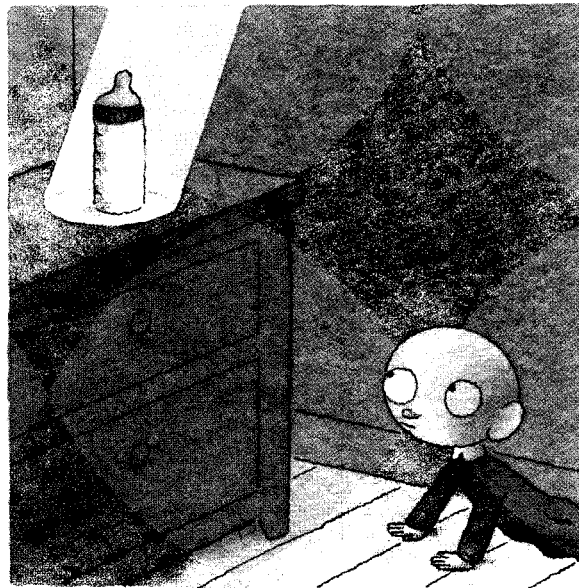
Darwinism.”) And if you are tempted to see this as a red state–blue state issue, think again: although it’s true that more Bush voters than Kerry voters are creationists, just about half of Kerry voters believe that God created human beings in their present form, and most of the rest believe that although we evolved from less-advanced life forms, God guided the process. Most Kerry voters want evolution to be taught either alongside creationism or not at all.

What’s the problem with Darwin? His theory of evolu-

tion does clash with the religious beliefs that some people already hold. For Jews and Christians, God willed the world into being in six days, calling different things into existence. Other religions posit more physical processes on the part of the creator or creators, such as vomiting, procreation, masturbation, or the molding of clay. Not much room here for random variation and differential reproductive success.

But the real problem with natural selection is that it makes no intuitive sense. It is like quantum physics; we may intellectually grasp it, but it will never feel right to us. When we see a complex structure, we see it as the product of beliefs and goals and desires. Our social mode of understanding leaves it difficult for us to make sense of it any other way. Our gut feeling is that design requires a designer—a fact that is understandably exploited by those who argue against Darwin.

It’s not surprising, then, that nascent creationist views



are found in young children. Four-year-olds insist that everything has a purpose, including lions (“to go in the zoo”) and clouds (“for raining”). When asked to explain why a bunch of rocks are pointy, adults prefer a physical explanation, while children choose a functional one, such as “so that animals could scratch on them when they get itchy.” And when asked about the origin of animals and people, children tend to prefer explanations that involve an intentional creator, even if the adults raising them do not. Creationism—and belief in God—is bred in the bone.

VI. RELIGION AND SCIENCE WILL ALWAYS CLASH

Some might argue that the preceding analysis of religion, based as it is on supernatural beliefs, does not apply to certain non-Western faiths. In his recent book, *The End of Faith*, the neuroscientist Sam Harris mounts a fierce attack on religion, much of it directed at Christianity and Islam, which he criticizes for what he sees as ridiculous factual claims and grotesque moral views. But then he turns to Buddhism, and his tone shifts to admiration—it is “the most complete methodology we have for discovering the intrinsic freedom of consciousness, unencumbered by any dogma.” Surely this religion, if one wants to call it a religion, is not rooted in the dualist and creationist views that emerge in our childhood.

Fair enough. But while it may be true that “theologically correct” Buddhism explicitly rejects the notions of body-soul duality and immaterial entities with special powers, actual Buddhists believe in such things. (Harris himself recognizes this; at one point he complains about the millions of Buddhists who treat the Buddha as a Christ figure.) For that matter, although many Christian theologians are willing to endorse evolutionary biology—and it was legitimately front-page news when Pope John Paul II conceded that Darwin’s theory of evolution might be correct—this should not distract us from the fact that many Christians think evolution is nonsense.

Or consider the notion that the soul escapes the body at death. There is little hint of such an idea in the Old Testament, although it enters into Judaism later on. The New Testament is notoriously unclear about the afterlife, and some Christian theologians have argued, on the basis of sources such as Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, that the idea of a soul’s rising to heaven conflicts with biblical authority. In 1999 the pope himself cautioned people to

think of heaven not as an actual place but, rather, as a form of existence—that of being in relation to God.

Despite all this, most Jews and Christians, as noted, believe in an afterlife—in fact, even people who claim to have no religion at all tend to believe in one. Our afterlife beliefs are clearly expressed in popular books such as *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and *A Travel Guide to Heaven*. As the *Guide* puts it,

Heaven is dynamic. It’s bursting with excitement and action. It’s the ultimate playground, created purely for our enjoyment, by someone who knows what enjoyment means, because He invented it. It’s Disney World, Hawaii, Paris, Rome, and New York all rolled up into one. And it’s *forever*! Heaven truly is the vacation that never ends.

(This sounds a bit like hell to me, but it is apparently to some people’s taste.)

Religious authorities and scholars are often motivated to explore and reach out to science, as when the pope embraced evolution and the Dalai Lama became involved with neuroscience. They do this in part to make their world view more palatable to others, and in part because they are legitimately concerned about any clash with scientific findings. No honest person wants to be in the position of defending a view that makes manifestly false claims, so religious authorities and scholars often make serious efforts toward reconciliation—for instance, trying to interpret the Bible in a way that is consistent with what we know

about the age of the earth.

If people got their religious ideas from ecclesiastical authorities, these efforts might lead religion away from the supernatural. Scientific views would spread through religious communities. Supernatural beliefs would gradually disappear as the theologically correct version of a religion gradually became consistent with the secular world view. As Stephen Jay Gould hoped, religion would stop stepping on science’s toes.

But this scenario assumes the wrong account of where supernatural ideas come from. Religious teachings certainly shape many of the specific beliefs we hold; nobody is born with the idea that the birthplace of humanity was the Garden of Eden, or that the soul enters the body at the moment of conception, or that martyrs will be rewarded with sexual access to scores of virgins. These ideas are learned. But the universal themes of religion are not learned. They emerge as accidental by-products of our mental systems. They are part of human nature. ▀

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intellectually grasp it,
but it will never feel
right. Our gut feeling
is that design
requires a designer.**

TWO POEMS

by C. K. Williams

.....

PONIES

When the ponies are let out at dusk, they pound across their pasture,
pitching and bucking like the brutes their genes must dream they still are.

With their shaggy, winter-coarse coats, they seem stubbier than ever,
more diminutive, toylike, but then they begin their aggression rituals,

ears flattened, stained brown teeth bared, hindquarters humped,
and they're savage again, cruel, all but carnivorous if they could be.

Their shoes have been pulled off for the season, their halters are rope,
so they move without sound, as though on tiptoe, through the rising mist.

They drift apart now, halfheartedly nosing the stiff, sapless remnants
of field hay; sometimes one will lift and gaze back toward the barn.

A tiny stallion lies down, rolling onto his back first, then all the way flat.
A snort—rich, explosive; an answering sigh; silence again, shadows, dark.

PEGGY

The name of the horse of my friend's friend,
a farmer's son whose place we'd pass
when we rode out that way I remember,
not his name, just his mare's, Peggy,
a gleaming, well-built gray; surprising,
considering her one-stall plank shed.

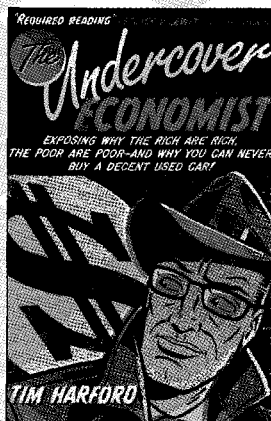
I even recall where they lived,
Half-Acre Road—it sounds like Frost,
and looked it: unpaved, silos and barns.
I went back not long ago;
it's built up, with rows on both sides
of bloated tract mansions.

One lot was still empty,
so I stopped and went through and found
that behind the wall of garages and hydrants
the woods had stayed somehow intact,
and wild, wilder; the paths overgrown,
the derelict pond a sink of weeds.

We'd gallop by there, up a hill,
our horses' flanks foaming with sweat;
then we'd skirt Peggy's fields
and cross to more woods, then a meadow,
the scent of which once, mown hay,
was so sweet I taste it still.

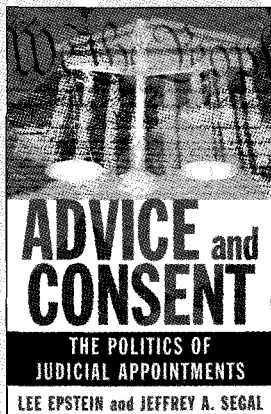
But now, the false-mullioned windows,
the developer's scrawny maples, the lawns—
I didn't know what to do with it all;
it just ached, like forgetting someone
you love is dead, and wanting to call them,
and then you remember, and they're dead again.

*C. K. Williams's most recent collection,
The Singing, received the 2003 National Book Award.
His Collected Poems 1963–2006 will be published next fall.*



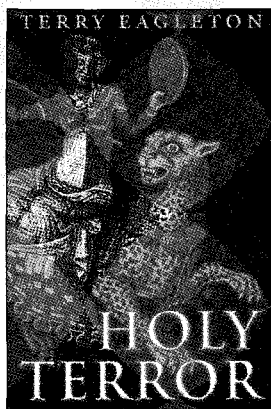
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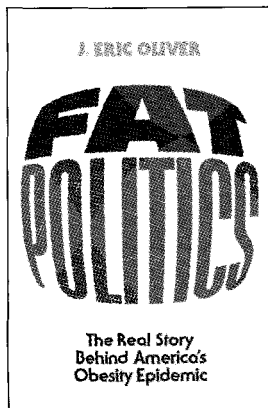
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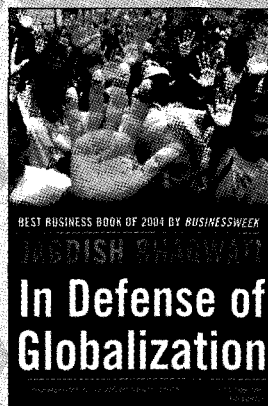
—Jerome P. Kassirer, M.D.,
Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, *New England Journal of Medicine*



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—Paul Kennedy,
Washington Post Book World

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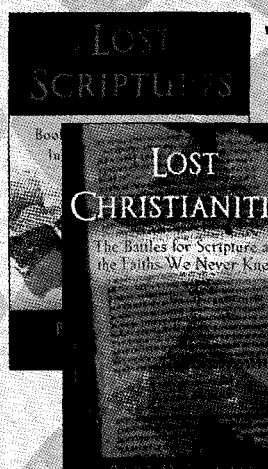
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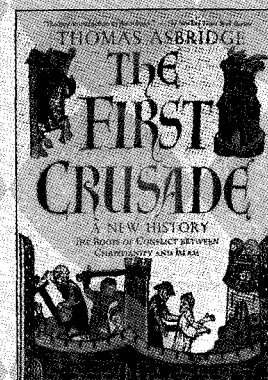


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—*The Financial Times*

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BOOKS & CRITICS

DECEMBER 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

Sample: Cuttings From Contemporary Fashion

edited by Bronwyn Cosgrave

Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion

edited by Valerie Steele

Mao by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday

New Art City by Jed Perl

reviewed by Benjamin Schwarz

PAGES 115–118

How to Win Millions Playing Slot Machines!... or Lose Trying

by Frank Legato

Beat the Slots by Marten Jensen

Designing Casinos to Dominate the Competition by Bill Friedman

Video Poker Optimum Play

by Dan Paymar

reviewed by Marc Cooper

PAGE 121

Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov

The Annotated Lolita

edited by Alfred Appel Jr.

reviewed by Christopher Hitchens

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Accidents by Yael Hedaya

reviewed by Joseph O'Neill

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Directions to Servants

by Jonathan Swift

reviewed by Mona Simpson

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READING LIST:

Cuba Libre

Castro's least favorite books

by Steve Wasserman

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A CLOSE READ:

The Truth of the Matter

by Robb Forman Dew

by Christina Schwarz

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BEST SELLERS ABROAD:

France

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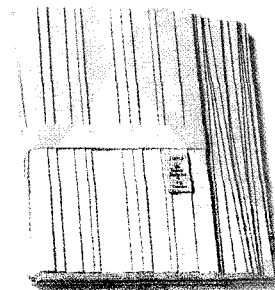
EDITOR'S CHOICE

Passion in Fashion

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

If there's any justice, many of the emerging fashion designers featured in this sleekly gorgeous book will soon be forgotten. But some will be, and deserve to be, the next big thing. (Truth be told, although its publishers tout this volume as a collection of up-and-comers, not a few of the young designers here, including Christopher Bailey, of Burberry; Olivier Theyskens, of Rochas; the Paris-based, Morocco-born, Israel-raised Alber Elbaz, of Lanvin; Nicolas Ghesquière, of Balenciaga; and Phoebe Philo, of Chloe, have already most definitely arrived.) Bronwyn Cosgrave, formerly of the British *Vogue*, assembled ten doyens of the fashion scene (a team of established stylists, schmatta scribes, and designers of high reputation and widely varying taste and talent) and asked each to pick the ten most promising budding designers from around the globe. Unbelievably, it appears that no two curators picked the same designer. So, printed on the jagged hand-cut pages, and bound between the artfully pleated white covers, are 1,000 illustrations (including previously unpublished sketches and other archival material) displaying the work of 100 often very obscure, often very gifted, usually astonishingly young designers. The rag trade is a famously cosmopolitan industry, and this being the era of globalized everything, the selections strain for the international (Dakar, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Osaka, Auckland, Antwerp, Vienna, Stockholm, and Silverlake are all represented). But, no surprise, designers based in the traditional fashion capitals of Paris, London, New York, and Milan have generated the most assured creations. (Even the sharply tailored 1940s-inspired clothes of the Chicago-born, Guanajuato-raised, Los Angeles-based Louis Verdad, who has inventively transformed tweed into an almost clingy fabric with lots of sex appeal, too often veer with insecure swagger toward costumey camp rather than artful reinterpretation.) At the risk of gross geographical and cultural stereotyping, I can't help noting that the Northern Europeans' clothes are (with such exceptions as those of the skillfully graceful Bruno Pieters and the "knitting genius" Christian Wijnants)



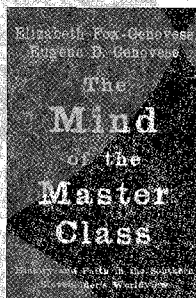
SAMPLE:
Cuttings From
Contemporary Fashion
edited by Bronwyn Cosgrave
Phaidon

THE BEST IN SCHOLARSHIP

THE MIND OF THE MASTER CLASS

History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese



"In exploring their terrible and complex subject with honesty and sympathy, the authors have grappled heroically with the ambiguity at the heart of history and in the heart of man."

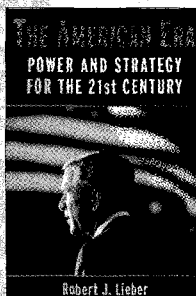
—The Atlantic Monthly

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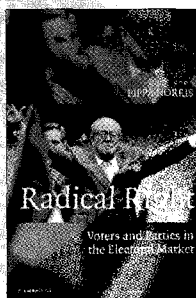
—Robert Kagan, author of *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*

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Pippa Norris



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over-intellectualized and antiseptic; the Parisians reign with aplomb far beyond their years; the brilliant but often unrestrained Londoners continue to lurch between self-consciously daring, unwearable high concepts and creations of great whimsy married to exquisite workmanship (such as in the work of Alice Temperley, Emma Cook, and the shoe designer Rupert Sanderson); and the Japanese are jejune—either stupidly so or, in their all-too-frequent predilection for tarding up young women as prepubescent sex objects, yuckily so.

By its very nature this compilation accentuates the avant-garde and the over-the-top; there's a lot of energy and creativity on these pages, but the cumulative effect is like being in a room full of yapping puppies. The seductiveness of great fashion lies not simply in the passion amply displayed in *Sample* but in the refinement of passion—a proposition demonstrated here by the ways in which the edginess of the young chief designers of the august Parisian houses has both invigorated and been tempered by the poise and cool finesse of those houses. But the innate sense of elegant restraint that has always marked the work of today's two best youngish designers—Narciso Rodriguez and Martin Grant—hasn't needed a great house's nurturance. The unconscionable neglect of Rodriguez, to my mind the best designer on the scene today, is the book's greatest flaw. (To be sure, this master of clean silhouettes is hardly a novice, but neither is he yet a household name, and he's no older than several of the designers prominently featured.) *Sample*, though, entirely appropriately lauds the work of Grant, a Paris-based Aussie, whose finely cut, highly restrained, almost stripped-down designs evince his preternatural sense of structure and shape. (Unlike nearly all the other designers in this book, Grant never formally studied fashion design; rather, he learned sewing from

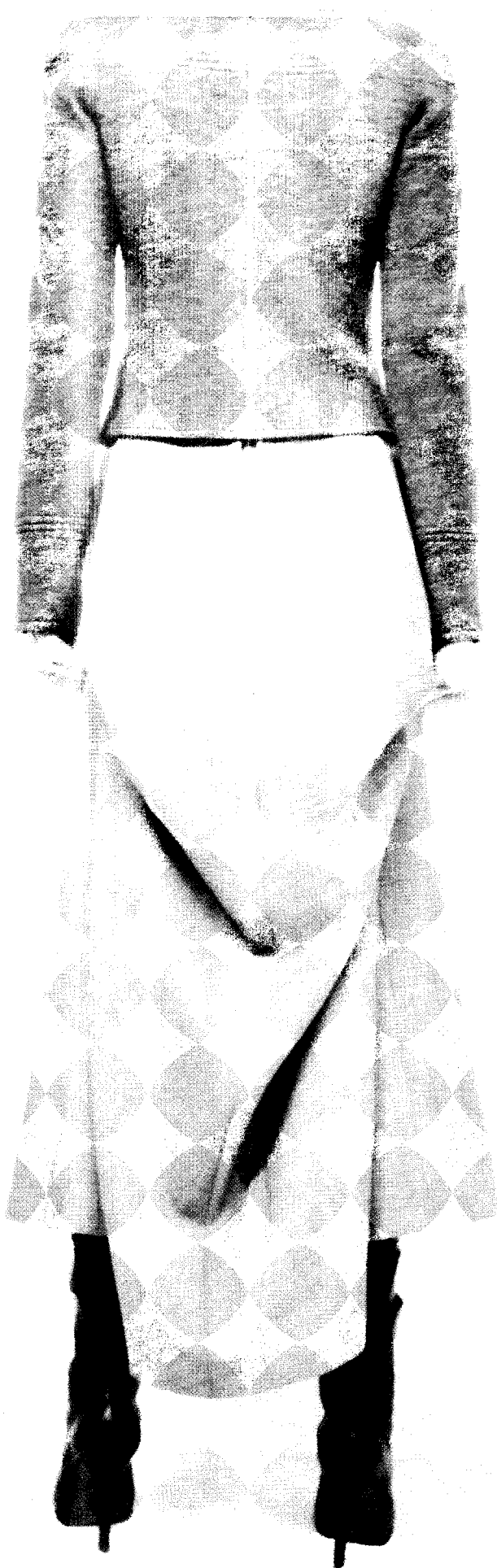
his dressmaker grandmother, studied sculpture in art school, and apprenticed as a tailor.) Of all the nascent geniuses in this compilation, Grant, who works out of his Marais boutique and also designs the in-house collection for Barneys New York, is, I'll bet, the one with the most enduring future. (Also, for a less developed but promising talent, keep an eye on Grant's fellow Australian Toni Maticevski, who works out of his parents' house in Melbourne, and whose floaty yet urbane dresses here display a winning combination of exuberance and composure.)

Whereas *Sample* aims merely (!) to forecast the coming designer elite, the three-volume, 1,600-plus-page **Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion**

(Gale/Thompson) encompasses everything from Albanian folk dress to the ultra-luxury designer Zoran. Although it's edited by Valerie Steele, the author of the smart and stylish *The Corset: A Cultural History* (a hot seller and the university-press version of soft porn), I dreaded reading this compendium, written largely by scholars (in its

dogged attempts at hipness academe has for more than a decade been plumbing the theoretical and sociological significance of such topics as "Elsa Schiaparelli and the decentered subject"). But the mostly crisp, authoritative entries—on matters ranging from buttons to foot binding, from the burqa to the thong (undergarment, not sandal), and from Brooks Brothers to the "King of Cling" and master of precise construction Azzedine Alaïa—proved addictive and fascinating. Inevitably, one has quibbles: I could stand a bit less analysis of ethnic clothes (much of which can be found in the anthropological literature) and a lot more on the great fashion houses (exaggerations and lies litter the world of haute couture, so we're really in need of authoritative information). Some of the omissions, however, are criminal. Peter Russell, a designer of beautiful, jauntily sophisticated women's suits





Clockwise from left: jacket and long skirt, by Martin Grant, autumn/winter 1999; "Guépière," by Olivier Theyskens, autumn/winter 2004; and "Emily," a shoe by Rupert Sanderson, autumn/winter 2004

from the 1930s to the 1950s, goes unmentioned, as does Norman Parkinson, who more than any other fashion photographer captured the charm, intelligence, and humor of great feminine beauty. And Edward Molyneux—Christian Dior's favorite couturier, whose creations managed to be at once winsome and supremely elegant—rates one line: in the article devoted to zippers, for his use of them in his coats. (Digby Morton, among the greatest

women's suit makers ever, gets a mere two mentions.) Clothes mavens and those interested primarily in the subject's ethnographic, sociological, or economic aspects must have this work, but for the rest the sumptuously illustrated and perceptively written if somewhat dated *The Fashion Book* (Phaidon) actually gives a more complete but far less detailed and definitive history of high fashion. (Phaidon: it's time for a new edition.)

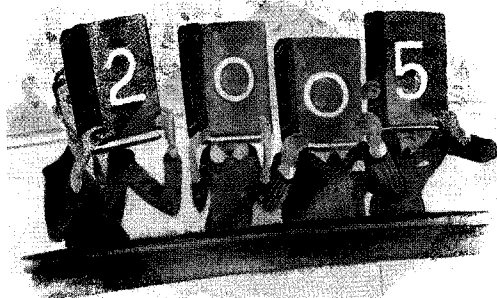
Mao, by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday (Knopf). This volume, the most complete and assiduously researched biography of its subject yet published, presents a detailed portrait of Mao as an opportunistic gangster and a sadist (not even a committed ideologue!) who was, the authors convincingly argue, responsible for "well over 70

million deaths in peacetime"—more than Hitler's and Stalin's tolls combined. Chang, the author of *Wild Swans*, a compelling account of her family's and her country's agony during the Cultural Revolution (it's the best-selling nonfiction paperback in publishing history), and her husband, Halliday, a historian of the Soviet Union, tenaciously chronicle the Great Helmsman's sanguinary purges and manmade famines. They reveal him as unrelievedly unsavory (he disliked bathing and toothbrushing and enjoyed witnessing torture) and, it seems, a man devoid of all human virtues. Even the heroics of the Long March, they carefully demonstrate, were wholly fabricated. An almost endless indictment (I'm sure Mao was as relentlessly unredeemed as the authors demonstrate, but it's fair to say that *Mao* lacks a certain nuance), this work is nevertheless as well researched as possible, given current restrictions. (Chang scoured the available Chinese documents; Halliday was particularly resourceful in his investigations in the archives of the former Soviet Union; and the authors together interviewed several hundred subjects—including scores of Mao's officials, agents, and hangers-on, including his valet.) The book's subtitle, "The Unknown Story," overlooks the fact that scholars such as Stuart Schram and Roderick MacFarquhar have documented many of the worst excesses of Mao's regime, and that the memoirs of Mao's doctor, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, copiously displayed the Chairman's personal unpleasantness. But no earlier work comes close to matching the density of detail here, and in many cases—such as their account of Mao's scheming with the Japanese during World War II—the authors have performed brilliant historical detective work. Better books on Mao will eventually be written, but probably not until the regime that still reveres him reforms itself a good deal more. At the very least this book should finally mortify those former campus radical chowderheads who sported the Little Red Book (unread and unreadable) in the pocket of their Army surplus jackets.

New Art City, by Jed Perl (Knopf). This almost impossibly rich book evokes, explores, illuminates, and analyzes the Manhattan art world of the 1940s through the early 1960s, a period that famously saw the "triumph of American painting" and New York's concomitant rise to supremacy as the world's artistic capital. Perl's scintillating panorama leads readers from creaky wooden-floored downtown lofts to the International Style buildings that transformed Park Avenue into a sleek canyon, and from the bohemian-utilitarian Cedar Tavern to the swank-modernist Grill Room of the Four Seasons. He takes in the art dealers, the curators, and the critics who oxygenated artistic life; developments in theater, dance, music, film, philosophy, and poetry that influenced and were influenced by the artists and their work; and the frenetic cultural and social whirl that MOMA incessantly stirred. And he interweaves astute pen portraits of artists both celebrated and neglected (Hans Hofmann, de Kooning, Pollock, and Rothko, but also Nell Blaine, Burgoyne Diller, and Earl Kerkam) with penetrating, clear-eyed, and jargon-free assessments of their creations (see especially his brilliant appraisal of the contrasting astringencies of Donald Judd and Fairfield Porter) and with keen and sympathetic analysis of the ideas that animated them. Perl, *The New Republic's* art critic, is unerringly alert throughout to the broad economic, commercial, social, intellectual, and cultural forces that engendered, channeled, impinged upon, and ultimately vitiated the Manhattan art scene. Dore Ashton's discerning and graceful 1973 book, *The New York School*, took a similarly sweeping and ambitious approach; Perl's work—the sort of grand marriage of criticism, history, and biography that Edmund Wilson achieved in his finest books—is in most ways an even greater accomplishment. The book can sometimes be hard going; Perl is a lucid and often witty writer, but he's frequently grappling with complex and dizzying ideas. The effort is worth it. *New Art City* is a thrilling achievement. ■

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of *The Atlantic*.

JASON SCHNEIDER



BOOKS OF THE YEAR

Selected by The Atlantic's literary editor, Benjamin Schwarz

FORGOTTEN ARMIES

by Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper (Harvard)

FASCINATION: STORIES

by William Boyd (Knopf)

NEVER LET ME GO: A NOVEL

by Kazuo Ishiguro (Knopf)

NEW ART CITY

by Jed Perl (Knopf)

THE COMMAND OF THE OCEAN

by N.A.M. Rodger (Norton)

ON BEAUTY: A NOVEL

by Zadie Smith (Penguin Press)

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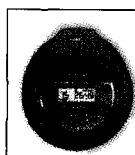
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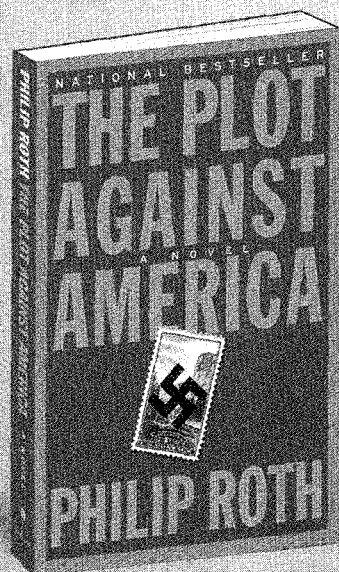
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**A NEW YORK TIMES
BOOK REVIEW
BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR**

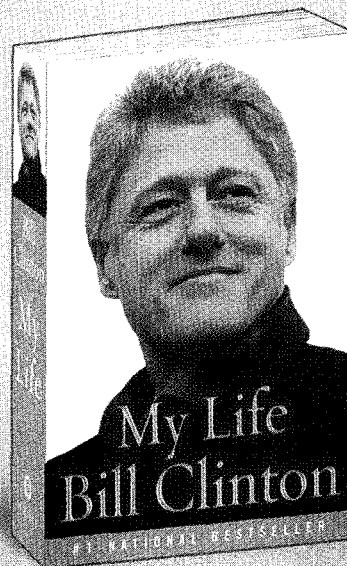
"A terrific political novel...
Sinister, vivid, dreamlike...creepily
plausible.... You turn the pages,
astonished and frightened."
—*The New York Times Book Review*



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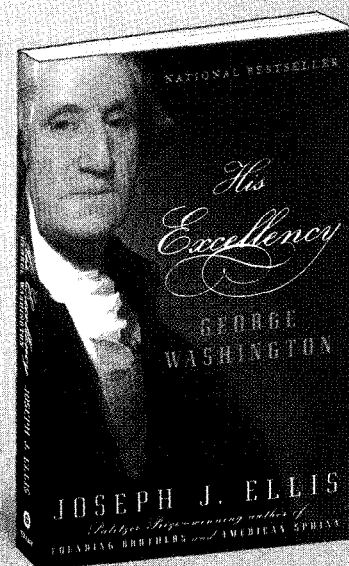
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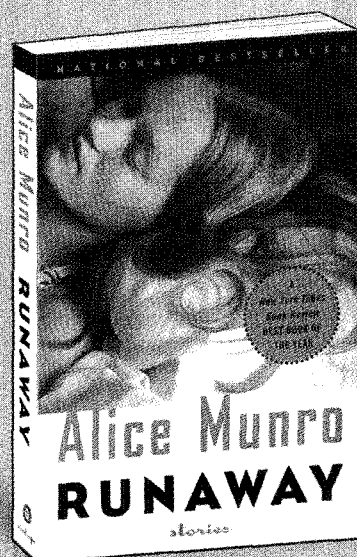


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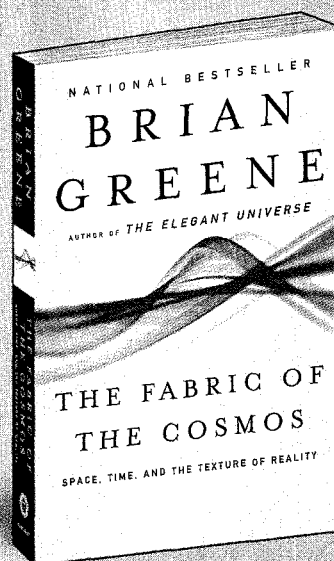


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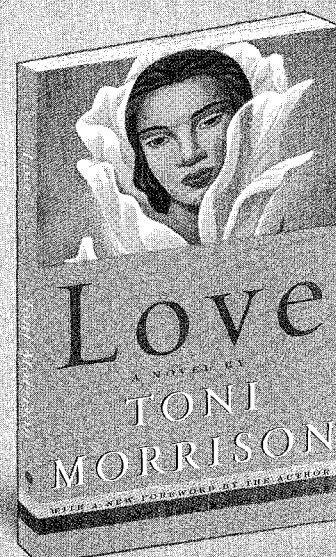
**A NEW YORK TIMES
BOOK REVIEW
BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR**

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best fiction writer now working in North
America. *Runaway* is a marvel."
—*The New York Times Book Review*



**A DISCOVER BEST
BOOK OF THE YEAR**

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BOOKS

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How slot machines give gamblers the business

BY MARC COOPER

When legalized casino gambling dawned in America, in the era of Bugsy Siegel and Meyer Lansky, primitive slot machines—those one-armed bandits—served as little more than mechanical babysitters for the wives and girlfriends of high-roller card and dice players. And for decades thereafter, even as casinos low-rolled their way into the mainstream, gambling itself retained an air of disrepute (charming though it could be) that tended to keep decent folks away. But the recent proliferation of highly sophisticated, computerized, brightly lit, singing-and-talking slots has done away with any lingering social stigma attached to the betting life. Some statistics, random but telling:

America now has twice as many publicly available gambling devices that take money—slot and video-poker machines and electronic lottery outlets—as it does ATMs that dispense it. In the past fifteen years the number of such devices has grown five-fold, to more than 740,000, and it's still mounting. This year a record 73 million Americans will visit one of the 1,200 gambling joints now stretching from coast to coast—a nearly 40 percent increase in visitors from just five years ago. Players make an average of six pilgrimages a year to these beckoning temples of luck, and more than a quarter of American adults now list gambling as their No. 1 entertainment choice. As much as 70 percent of the \$48 billion in gaming revenues raked in by the casinos comes from slots. (Texas Hold'em poker and other table games may be the latest gambling fad both on TV and in Ben Affleck's social circle, but for the casinos it's all about machines, machines, machines.) Americans now spend on slots five times the amount they spend on movie tickets.

SEYMOUR CHWAST



The slot-machine market is so hot, it's in a state of perpetual shake-out. More than 500 games a year are introduced on the casino floor, but each is granted only a few weeks' probation. They either perform immediately or get yanked, junked, and replaced (a profitable machine that costs about \$10,000 can pay for itself in just thirty days).

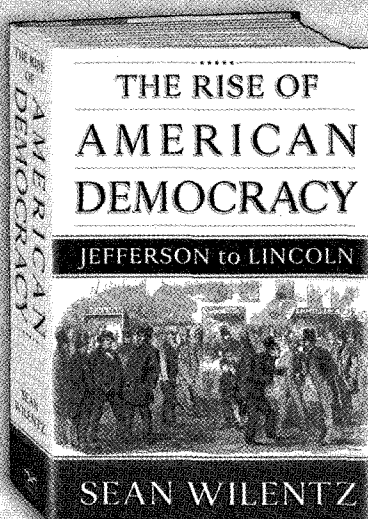
Two contradictory, clashing principles—embodied in the terms TOD and REVPAC—drive the design of the modern slot machine. Customers, the suckers who put the money into the machines, want maximum TOD, time on device. They want to play as long as possible with their stake, and maybe even win. The machine operators want maximum REVPAC, revenue per available customer. Duh. The resulting products represent a compromise—these machines keep you more entertained and more engaged, and create the illu-

sion that you are winning while making it more likely you will lose.

Take, for instance, the gleaming chrome totem that is the Jumbo Popcorn Slotto Five-Reel Bonus Game, made by AC Coin & Slot, of Pleasantville, New Jersey. Look at this nine-foot-tall, \$11,000 behemoth and you'll see a century's worth of slot-machine evolution. The bottom half, with its bank of spinning reels stamped with symbols, appears little different from the basic three-reel mechanical slot machine built by the San Franciscan Charles August Fey in 1899. But the upper half of the machine is something else: a state-of-the-art "top box" that offers a bonus round of play beyond that of the basic reels below. (Fey's mechanical design dominated almost unchanged until the 1960s, when some electronic circuits were added to the machines. In the 1980s slots were computerized and bonus rounds were introduced,

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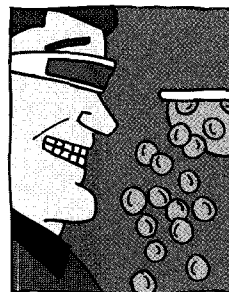
and in the 1990s video technology and top boxes appeared. The latest twist involves bonuses that pop up for no special reason—except to keep you playing. You get more TOD. The casino gets more REV PAC. Everyone's having fun.)

This particular top box is a glass case with a life-size theater popcorn kettle suspended inside, brimming not with corn but with a couple of dozen numbered "slotto" balls. Hit a bonus and a retro-sounding digital voice from somewhere inside the Slotto machine merrily announces, over a swell of 1950s movie-house music, "It's time for the Popcorn Bonus Show! Which size popcorn will you win?" After the same voice declares the size of the winnings (for instance, "medium"), the kettle inside the glass case begins rattling and shaking, and to the sounds of popping corn, slotto balls plop from the cooker and land in a tube, revealing the exact number of bonus credits—all of this supposedly being a great incentive to keep playing. "The fifty-to-sixty-year-old people who love to play machines are a pretty lively bunch," Chris Strano, AC Coin & Slot's marketing VP, said after correctly identifying me as one more thrill-seeking Boomer (I was playing with a generous exhibition Slotto machine at the Southern Gaming Summit, in casino-rich—pre-Katrina—Biloxi, Mississippi). "They are the Woodstock generation, and they want to have fun. That's what we give them. Something exciting, entertaining, and unpredictable."

They (that is to say "we") are also apparently hungry for comfy and reassuring themes, so machine builders are jostling one another in a frenzied race to license every nook and cranny of popular culture, both high and low: movies and movie stars; TV sitcoms, game shows, and commercials; board games and puzzles; myths, leg-

ends, and fairy tales; fads and celebrities; cars and boats; comic books and comic strips. Even Spam and Tabasco-sauce machines have become common. When a player hits a bonus round on an I Love Lucy machine, he's treated to video clips from the legendary TV show. (A rare version made several years ago even sprayed a rich chocolate scent in front of the player's nose when the classic scene of Lucy in the chocolate factory was shown.) This year's gaming summit featured new entries

with *Star Wars*, *Men in Black*, and *The Apprentice* themes. Lose enough spins on this last machine and Donald Trump's perfectly reproduced voice shouts out, "You're fired!"—a better phrase than "You're bankrupt!"



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Playing that Donald machine, by the way, just *might* bankrupt you. It can cost \$2 a spin, and if you're fast enough, you can spin it 500 to 600 times an hour. Which brings us to the other latest trend in modern slot machines: games that apply a sinister multi-coin, multi-pay-line, low-denomination formula. Now we're talking real REV PAC.

Until recently most slot machines accepted only quarters or silver dollars, usually a maximum of three at a time. (Penny and nickel slots were relegated to sleazy grind joints

and thought to be the last recourse for those unfortunate souls who had run out of Ripple.) The typical player would bet maybe a half dollar per pull. Those seeking more risk would play a dollar. Three-dollar bets were for the few who thrived on living dangerously. But rejoice, for we live in an age of ever more finely calibrated choice, and now the player, by touching the machine's interactive video screen, can choose a variety of denominations to be played—those denominations being deceptively

itty-bitty. Cutting-edge machines like The Apprentice are designed to be played mostly at the one-cent and five-cent levels. Sounds cheap enough. Sounds like you'll get maximum TOD.

The catch is that these new machines allow you—encourage you, really—to play dozens, scores, even hundreds of “coins,” or credits, per spin. The illusion created is rather startling. When the casual player slips a \$20 bill into the machine, he may feel rich upon finding that he has a whopping 2,000 credits to gamble. That is, unless he's conscious of the fact that a spin could cost a fourth or even more than half of his total stake. The machine makers finally figured out that the lower the denomination, and thus the more coins one is allowed to play, the bigger the resulting bets. A player winds up more comfortably wagering amounts unthinkable even a few years ago—not just one or three or five dollars a spin but \$10 or even \$12.

Now that the casinos have you betting more than ever, two other questions arise: First, what will be the machine's payback percentage—that is, how much will the casino keep of every dollar you play? And second, with what frequency will the machine pay off your portion? There's no guesswork involved in these formulas, and certainly no “luck.” Nowadays every machine on every casino floor in America is a sophisticated, powerful digital processor whose outcomes and paybacks are quite precisely determined long before any player walks up to play. “It's true,” writes Frank Legato, the author of *How to Win Millions Playing Slot Machines! ... or Lose Trying*, who—despite the title of his book—knocks down every hoary myth about how to win at slots. “Regardless of which mechanical apparatus is added; regardless of how many funny cartoons there are; regardless of whether they play the song from a TV show, give the player a board game to play, play the overture from *Les Misérables*, or get down on one knee and sing ‘Mammy,’ all modern slot machines ... are computers.”

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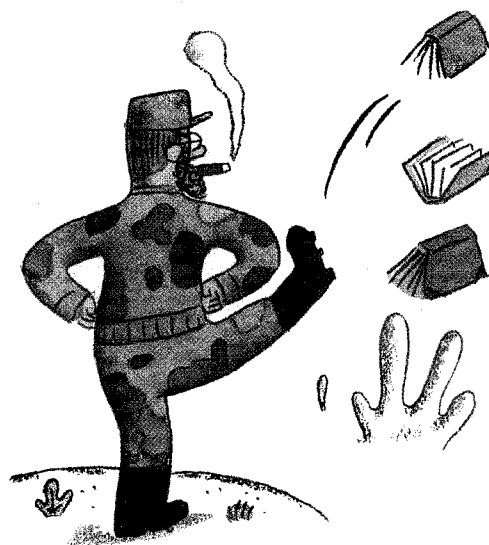
BY STEVE WASSERMAN

Persona Non Grata: A Memoir of Disenchantment With the Cuban Revolution, by Jorge Edwards, preface by Octavio Paz (1993).

Edwards, a renowned novelist, was Chilean President Salvador Allende's man in Havana in the winter of 1970–1971, there to open an embassy and establish a diplomatic presence for the fledgling socialist government in Santiago. However, his friendship with the dissident Cuban poet Heberto Padilla provoked Castro to accuse him of “conduct hostile to the revolution” and to banish him from the island. His indispensable memoir first appeared in English in 1977.

Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution, by K. S. Karol (1970). A longtime editor at *Le Nouvel Observateur*, the Polish-born Karol is a survivor of both Nazism and the Soviet gulag. Still, a hardy idealism born of a lifelong commitment to democratic socialism prompted him to accept an invitation from Castro and Che Guevara to visit Cuba in the early 1960s and judge for himself the new experiment in social revolution. No writer before him had enjoyed such complete access to confidential government files and to Castro and his comrades. Karol wrote an honest book, sharply criticizing Castro for becoming a caudillo. In turn, Castro denounced him—inaccurately—as a CIA agent.

Is Cuba Socialist? by René Dumont (1974). Like Karol, Dumont was a sympathetic observer with democratic-socialist politics. A French agronomist with expertise in the developing and newly independent nations of Africa, he, too, accepted an invitation from Castro to witness and critique the revolution then in the making. Dumont was appalled by what he saw: Cuba's far from withering state, the militarization of its economy, the idolatry surrounding its overindulged “maximum leader.” Refusing to lay blame on the U.S. embargo, Dumont declared that Castro himself was largely responsible for the failures of his revolution. Like



Karol, Dumont was condemned by Castro as an agent of Washington.

Against All Hope: The Prison Memoirs of Armando Valladares (1986).

An antidote for those with a tendency to romanticize revolutionary despots, Valladares's memoir makes for compelling reading. For refusing, on religious grounds, to display a revolutionary slogan on his work desk, Valladares was awarded twenty-two years of torment and imprisonment. His was the first book to detail the abuses meted out by Castro and his men to those who fall from favor.

Sent Off the Field: A Selection From the Poetry of Heberto Padilla (1972).

This slim volume from the late poet (arrested in Havana in 1971 for, among other things, giving his Chilean friend and fellow writer Jorge Edwards “a negative view of the revolution”) contains many of his most melancholy and incendiary verses—earning him Castro's enmity. It was not for nothing that Plato sought to banish poets from his ideal republic. Padilla's arrest and subsequent forced “confession” would prove a turning point for many writers worldwide who had previously sympathized with Castro. Marguerite Duras, Carlos Fuentes, and Susan Sontag, among others, expressed their “disquiet” even as they sought to remain loyal to the Cuban revolution. In time, however, they came to recognize that the dream was over.

Steve Wasserman, former editor of the Los Angeles Times Book Review, is managing director of the New York office of Kneerim & Williams at Fish & Richardson, a literary agency. He has visited Cuba on numerous occasions, beginning in 1970.

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or RNG. Each and every second, even when the machine is otherwise idle, the RNG and its elaborate software cycle through a mind-twisting 200 million numbers. When a player drops in the first coin and pushes the “spin” button or pulls the lever, one of those numbers is frozen and is instantly communicated to the spinning reels, whether they be mechanical or virtual. The alignment of cherries, pears, carrots, Tabasco bottles, and singing bunnies is merely a visual representation of the predetermined outcome.

By law each RNG is preset to pay back to players a certain percentage of the money taken in. In Atlantic City there's an 83 percent minimum payback (or a 17 percent “hold” for the casino, if you prefer). In Nevada it's 75 percent. But most casinos set their machines in the low-to-mid 90s. A 90 percent payback may sound generous, but, as Legato points out, even a machine that paid back 100 percent—over the long run—would be a “break even” machine, offering players as much chance to lose as to win.

And “the long run” is a very long run—namely, infinity. Marten Jensen, the so-called “Doctor of Gambling,” points out in his *Beat the Slots* that even an apparently low-stakes slot session can chew right through a hefty bankroll. Jensen calculates that playing only 25 cents per spin on a machine with a 90 percent payback will cost a gambler \$12 an hour. Play the more common bet nowadays of \$5 a spin and the average loss will be \$240 an hour. Any wonder that dollar-slot players who roll up to the casinos in their RVs are treated with the same deference once granted to C-note-betting blackjack enthusiasts?

There is no way to gain an edge on slot machines—no possible strategy for beating them other than simply not playing them. So-called “hot” and “cold” machines are simply a fantasy of suckers. The only real choice a player has—over the long run—is *how* to lose his or her money.

Slot-machine makers offer two basic choices—though they're hardly advertised. You can choose either a “low hit frequency” machine, which

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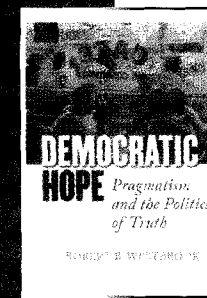
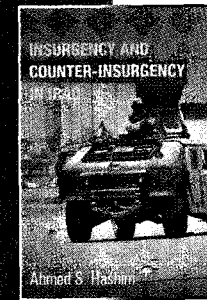
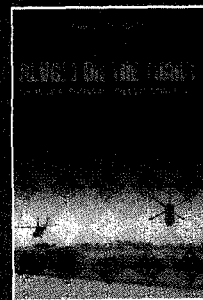
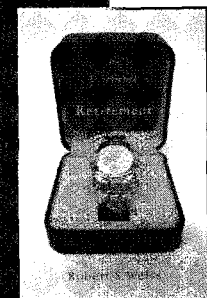
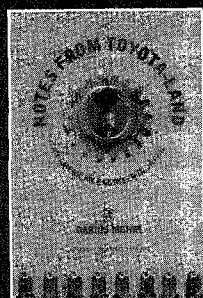
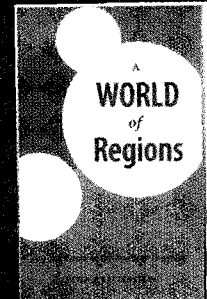
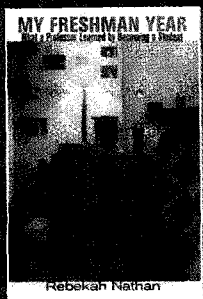
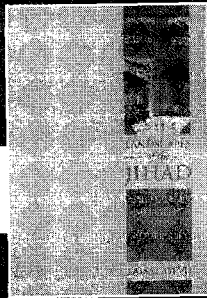
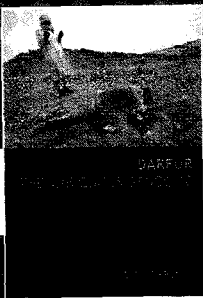


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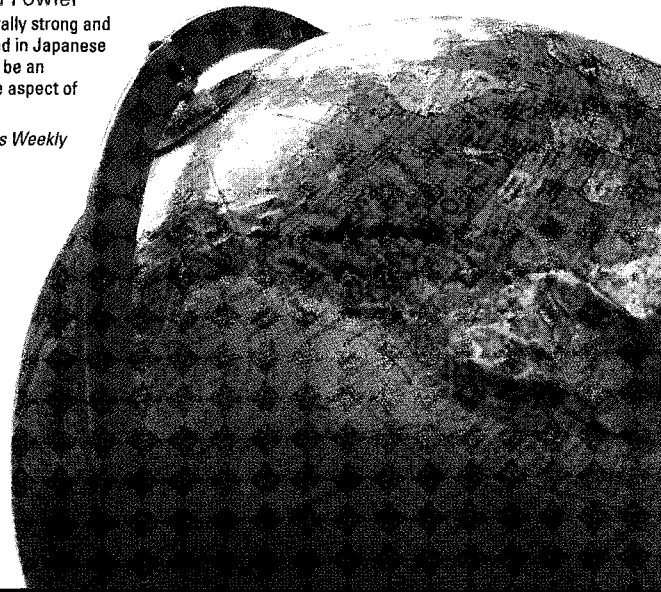
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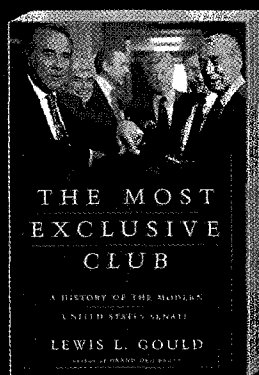
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pays off infrequently but pays off big (sometimes with what are called "life-changing" jackpots), or a "high hit frequency" machine, which almost constantly trickles back part of what you put in but offers little chance of a big payoff. In other words, you can play a boring machine with the slim chance of getting rich, or have some fun with almost no chance of wealth.

Inside MGM-Mirage's Beau Rivage casino, on the now ravaged Biloxi shoreline, I had a nasty encounter with the ultimate low-hit-frequency machine, one with an elusive, life-changing score: Megabucks, made by the industry giant International Game Technology, of Reno, Nevada. A raging national success, Megabucks machines are linked by network in order to pool payoffs in always increasing mega-jackpots. The night I played at Beau Rivage, the jackpot was more than \$3.2 million—very much like a state lottery with a "spin" button attached. I fed just one \$20 bill into the Megabucks slot. Unwilling to play at the \$3 level required to win the mega-jackpot, I chose to play two nickels on each of the twelve available pay lines, a relatively modest \$1.20 bet per spin. Sitting at the machine, with its fifteen buttons on the console and its five whirring video columns on the computer screen, I felt as if I were

trying to fly a small helicopter. An odd combination of symbols blurred before me with each spin—cherries and grapes and pears were mixed in with Rolex watches, cameras, and passports, suggesting some sort of fantasy journey to a foreign fruit orchard—and each spin was punctuated with a short, dramatic musical riff. A fast grind it was, very fast: my twenty bucks disappeared in exactly four and a half minutes of play.

Enough. I downgraded the challenge to finding a machine that would

simply be fun to play and, yes, would offer me some extended TOD.

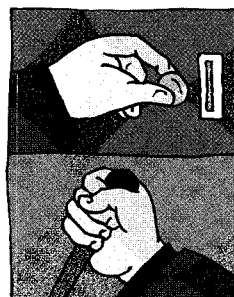
I searched the Beau Rivage for a more generous RNG, one of those high-hit-frequency machines intended to rekindle the fire in my Boomer soul. I settled on Mr. Cashman, a machine built by Aristocrat Technologies, of Sydney, Australia. Here was the opposite of the Megabucks machine. Mr. Cashman promised low jackpots but plenty of action, and an almost certain dribble of partial payback. I must, how-

ever, disclose my extreme initial disdain. I'm not squeamish about gambling. Rather, I'm a gambling snob. I pride myself on being a fairly accomplished blackjack player, one who relies on skill and strategy, and Mr. Cashman seemed to be about the most infantile, intellectually insulting device I had ever seen. Its five video reels featured primitively rendered zebras, rhinos, and lions mixed in with leopard-skin-covered block letters. The whole thing looked like a digital kindergarten phonetics workbook.

It was one of those new "penny" machines that allowed a play of 500 credits per spin—a crudely disguised and ultimately bankroll-busting \$5 machine. Refusing to be completely suckered, I played a miserly sixty cents per spin, hoping to make my \$20 buy-in last

beyond a few minutes.

An Aristocrat sales rep had told me earlier in the week that Mr. Cashman's appeal was that its bonus rounds were completely random—you never knew when Mr. Cashman himself was going to pop up and bestow a favor. And lo, on only my fifth spin a catchy digital crescendo announced that Mr. Cashman was about to visit me with one of those random bonuses. A smiling, anthropomorphic golden coin, part Pac-Man and part Planters peanut man,



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New Jersey

Megabucks
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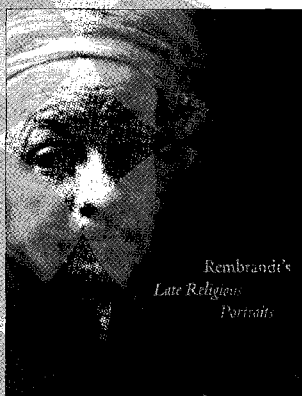
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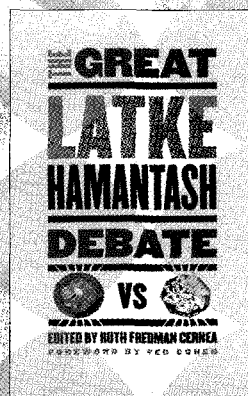


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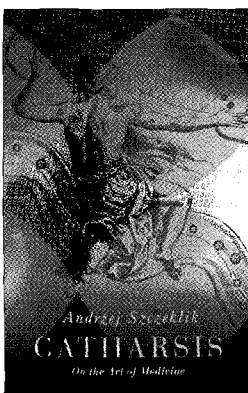


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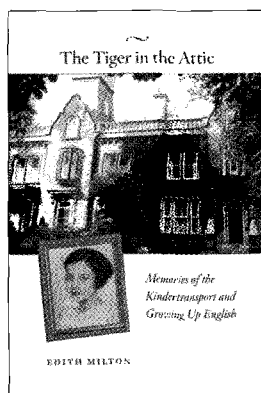
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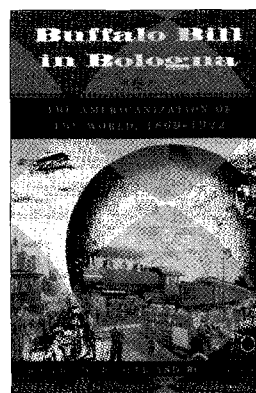


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decked out in a top hat and tap shoes, danced onto my screen, superimposing himself on the video reels. He tipped his hat and then proceeded to "spin" two of my five reels for me, producing 40 bonus credits—the most amusing forty cents I have ever won.

I was hooked. As the reels spun to the sound of galloping hooves (go figure!), I was treated to a rat-a-tat of little but near-constant "winning" hits, returning eight, twenty, thirty credits at a time. (So that you can keep the ledger straight: I was getting back eight, twenty, or thirty cents on bets of sixty cents—in other words, I was slowly losing.) When I turned up a bonus peacock after matching two 9s with a zebra, the machine seemed to pour out credits—hundreds of them. But it was harder to figure out exactly *why* I had won than it is to count the cards in a game of six-deck blackjack. No matter, I was having too much fun. After a full hour of play, five variously entertaining appearances by Mr. Cashman, and the occasional windfall, I had amassed 2,668 credits. Sated and delighted, I cashed out my \$6.68 in winnings and felt like Donald Trump. It was infinitely more entertaining to play the quick-hit, low-payout Mr. Cashman than it was to labor over the parsimonious Megabucks and its elusive, if not totally illusory, multimillion-dollar jackpot. I loved Mr. Cashman. What more could I ask? I got plenty of TOD and six bucks in winnings.

This new generation of gambling machines has, predictably, produced a new generation of gambling addicts: not players who thrive on the adrenaline rush of a high-wager roll of the dice or turn of a card but, rather, zoned-out "escape" players who yearn for the smooth numbness produced by the endlessly spinning reels. Industry critics say that the lion's share of slot-machine profits come, also predictably, from a relatively small percentage of the players—the compulsive and the addicted. Gambling researchers describe these slot zombies as being fearful that another player will sit down on a neighboring stool and distract them by trying to talk to them.

In his *Designing Casinos to Dominate*

the Competition, an exhaustive 600-page, eight-pound study of every major casino in Nevada, the former casino executive Bill Friedman recognizes the cocooning allure of machine gambling, implicitly arguing that the snugger and more isolating a casino space is, the more inviting it is to machine players. The most productive joints, he writes, are "segmented ... into separated gambling areas that ... create intimate playing settings." Never mind elaborate theme décor. Friedman contends that the perfect gambling environment is a low-ceilinged, dimly lit maze of nooks and crannies that encourage players to curl up by themselves in front of their favorite machines, much as they do in front of the home TV—unmolested, unobserved, and entranced. Who fifty years ago would have figured that television was a gateway drug that would lead to gambling addiction? (Of course, it has also led to adolescent video games like *Grand Theft Auto*, which—in a sign of the times—some consider to be much

push. Since 1981, when the gambling theorist and poker master David Sklansky wrote an article in *Casino and Sports* outlining how an experienced and skillful player can gain a slight (very slight) odds advantage over the house, beating the machine has been an obsession for millions. However, since video poker is governed by RNGs set for paybacks similar to those of slot machines, the best even a topnotch gambler can achieve—playing "computer perfect" on the most generously set machine—is a less than one percent advantage.

In his straightforward *Video Poker Optimum Play* the retired computer expert and part-time poker-dealer instructor Dan Paymar starkly outlines the matter. "Suppose you're playing 600 hands per hour on a five-coin \$1 Deuces Wild at 100.75% average payback," he says of one of the machines known to pay back more than they take in. "At five dollars per play, you're wagering \$3,000 per hour. Over the long term,

Players are entranced by slot machines, much as they are by the home TV. Who fifty years ago would have figured that television was a gateway drug that would lead to gambling addiction?

more pernicious than mere gambling devices. Note that the former Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed has lobbied for slot-machine interests, whereas Senator Hillary Clinton recently denounced the more prurient aspects of *Grand Theft Auto*.)

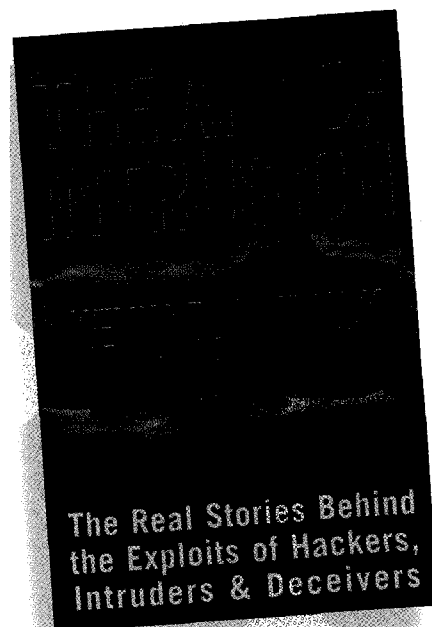
In this world of quiet but desperate gambling-machine dependence, video poker is the undisputed crack cocaine. Its rapid-fire reinforcement schedule (clinical jargon for fast pacing and frequent payoffs) is an accelerant to addiction. Experts say that whereas horse-race betting, for instance, can take ten or fifteen years to mature into a pathological addiction, getting hooked on video poker often takes only a few months. Around since 1978, and now making up about a quarter of gambling machines, video poker is alluring in that—unlike other gambling devices—it involves a measure of skill; you are playing live poker against a computer, and it actually matters which buttons you

you can expect to gain an average of .75% of your wagers, or \$22.50 per hour ... In other words, if you are willing to risk \$24,000 a day, "over the long term" you might make a little more than \$150 a day. You *might*.

Wage slavery, by comparison, suddenly seems like a hell of a good deal.

If video poker is the crack cocaine of machines, then the Multi-Strike game is the mound of snow that Tony Montana sticks his face in at the end of *Scarface*. A few weeks after the Biloxi exhibition I played a session of Multi-Strike in a San Diego-area Indian casino. A clever, rather insidious contraption, it lets the user play not one but four hands of poker each round, each hand paying odds twice as high as the previous. As with an arcade game, however, the player has to continue winning in order to advance. Get to the fourth hand and the payout is eight times as high as in the first hand.

True crime.



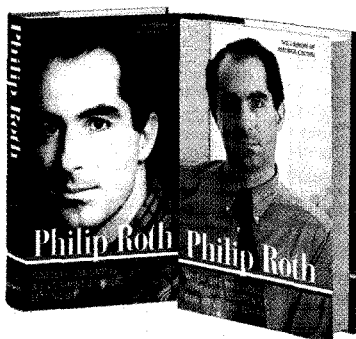
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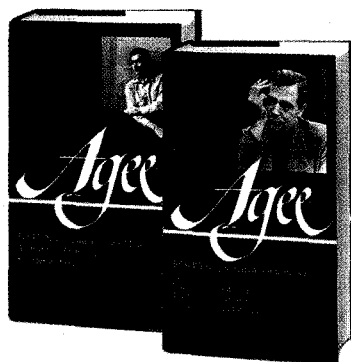
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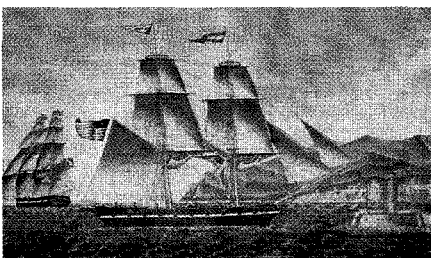
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I found myself immediately entranced by the digital music that accompanied my play. I could aurally "read" my progress—the musical riffs, and my level of tension, escalated one key each time I got bumped up to the next hand. I was finished piddling around. Playing twenty dollars per round, five bucks on each of the four hands dealt out, I harbored a certain giddy anticipation of making it to the fourth hand, hitting a royal flush, and bagging \$32,000. The beauty of Multi-Strike, at least from the casino point of view, is that although it theoretically pays back the same as any other video-poker machine, its play is so complicated, there is so much happening on the screen, the betting must be so strategic, that it requires NASA-level concentration to play perfectly.

Several days before my Multi-Strike session I started reading a stack of articles and tip sheets on how to compete with its computerized brain. But within the first few minutes of real-life play I was hopelessly adrift, mesmerized by the complexity of decisions I had to make, distracted by the fetching music, confused by the differing strategies needed for each succeeding hand.

My reverie of a five-figure win faded quickly. No single round paid me more than \$180 (against a \$20 bet). After twenty minutes I walked away \$400 poorer, with a pounding headache and a pain in my stomach. I might as well have blown through a pile of coke. But I wasn't about to go cold turkey. I knew instinctively the only effective antidote for such a foul mood: I needed a half hour of mindless entertainment with the smiling and much more generous Mr. Cashman. ▣

Marc Cooper is a contributing editor of *The Nation*, a columnist for *LA Weekly*, and a senior fellow at the Institute for Justice and Journalism at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. His most recent book is *The Last Honest Place in America: Paradise and Perdition in the New Las Vegas*.

Recent books by Atlantic authors:

Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics, by Michael J. Sandel. Harvard University Press. Portions of this book first appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

BOOKS

Hurricane Lolita

Fifty years ago Vladimir Nabokov published his most notorious novel. Its ravishing effects can still be felt

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, in which young female students meet in secret with Xeroxed copies of Nabokov's masterpiece on their often chaste and recently chadored laps, it is at first a surprise to discover how unsandalized the women are. Without exception, it turns out, they concur with Vera Nabokov in finding that the chief elements of the story are "its beauty and pathos." They "identify" with Lolita, because they can see that she wants above all to be a normal girl-child; they see straight through Humbert, because he is always blaming his victim and claiming that it was she who seduced him. And this perspective—such a bracing change from our conventional worried emphasis on pedophilia—is perhaps more easily come by in a state where virgins are raped before execution because the Koran forbids the execution of virgins; where the censor cuts Ophelia out of the Russian movie version of *Hamlet*; where any move that a woman makes can be construed as lascivious and inciting; where goatish old men can be gifted with infant brides; and where the age of "consent" is more like nine. As Nafisi phrases it,

This was the story of a twelve-year-old girl who had nowhere to go. Humbert had tried to turn her into his fantasy, into his dead love, and he had destroyed her. The desperate truth of *Lolita's* story is *not* the rape of a twelve-year-old by a dirty old man but *the confiscation of one individual's life by another*. We don't know what Lolita would have become if Humbert had not engulfed her. Yet the novel, the finished work, is hopeful, beautiful even, a defense not just of beauty but of life ... Warming up and suddenly inspired, I added that in fact Nabokov had taken revenge on our own solip-sizers; he had taken revenge on the Ayatollah Khomeini ...

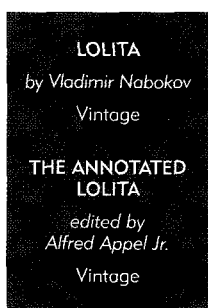
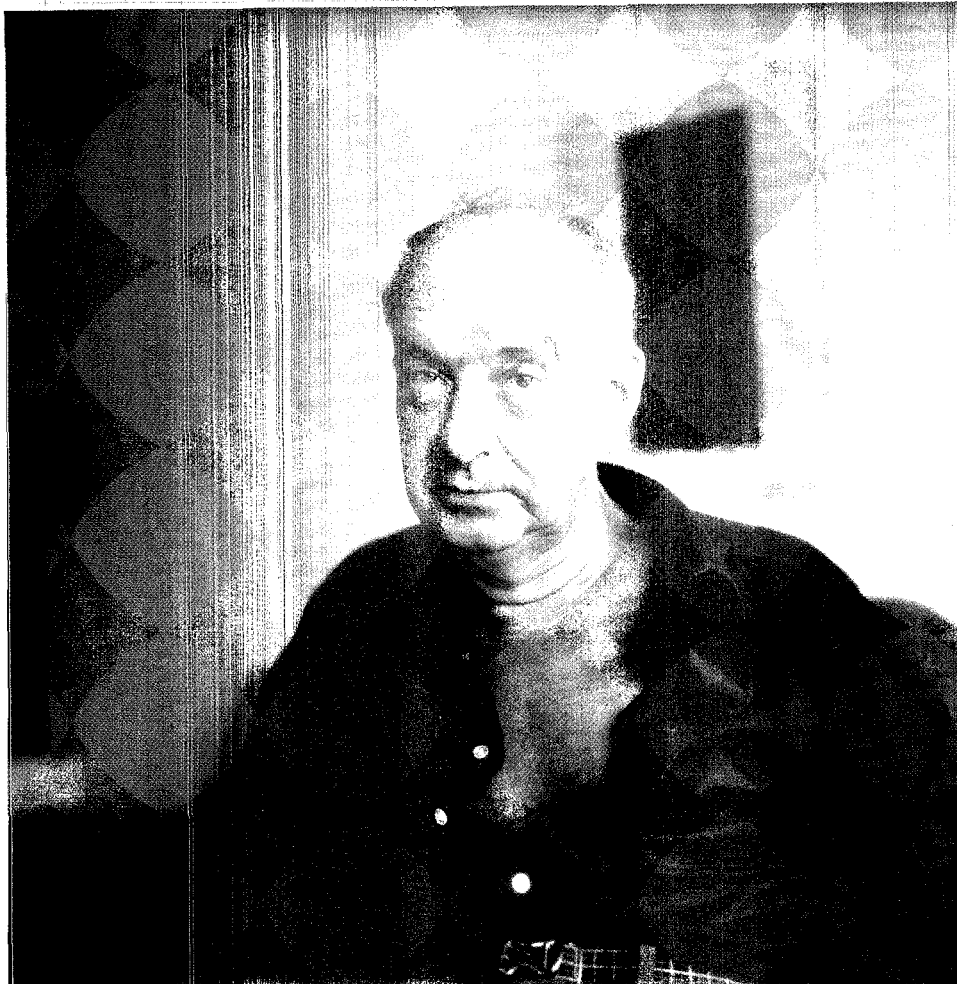
It's extraordinary to think that the author of those anti-utopianical classics *Bend Sinister* and *Invitation to a Beheading*, who would surely have felt extreme pleasure at this tribute, can be posthumously granted such an unexpected yet—when you reflect on it—perfectly intelligible homage. In his own essay on the fate of *Lolita*, Nabokov recalled a publisher who warned him that if he helped the author get it into print, they would both go straight to jail. And one of the many, many pleasures of Alfred Appel's masterly introduction and annotation is the discovery that Nabokov did not realize that Maurice Girodias and the Olympia Press were specialists in—well, shall we just say "erotica"?—when he let them have the manuscript. (The shock and awe surrounding its publication were later well netted by the great lepidopterist in one of John Shade's cantos in *Pale Fire*: "It was a year of tempests, Hurricane / Lolita swept from Florida to Maine.") Innocence of that kind is to be treasured.

And innocent life, of course, is the problem to begin with. If Dolores Haze, whose first name means suffering and grief, that "dolorous and hazy darling," had not been an innocent, there would be nothing tragic in the tale. (Azar Nafisi is someone who, in spite of her acuity and empathy, fails what

I call the Martin Amis test. Amis once admitted that he had read the novel carefully before noticing that in its "foreword"—written not by the unreliable Humbert but by "John Ray, Jr., Ph.D."—we learn that Lolita has died in childbirth. She's over before she's begun. That's where

the yearning search for a normal life and a stable marriage got her. I fear that the young ladies of Tehran missed that crucial, callous postdate/update sentence as well.)

Then we must approach the question of how innocent *we* are in all this. Humbert writes without the smallest intention of titillating his audience. The whole narrative is, after all, his extended jailhouse/madhouse



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plea to an unseen jury. He has nothing but disgust for the really pornographic debauchee Quilty, for whose murder he has been confined. But he does refer to him as a "brother," and at one point addresses us, too, as "Reader! *Bruder!*," which is presumably designed to make one think of Baudelaire's address of *Les Fleurs du Mal* to "*Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!*" I once read of an interview given by Roman Polanski in which he described listening to a lurid radio account of his offense even as he was fleeing to the airport. He suddenly realized the trouble he was in, he said, when he came to appreciate that he had done something for which a lot of people would furiously envy him. Hamlet refers to Ophelia as a nymph ("Nymph, in thy orisons, be all my sins remembered"), but she is of marriageable age, whereas a nymphet is another thing altogether.

Actually, it is impossible to think of employing *Lolita* for immoral or unsavory purposes, and there is now a great general determination to approach the whole book in an unfussed, grown-up, broad-minded spirit. "Do not misunderstand me," said Amis *père* when he reviewed the first edition, "if I say that one of the troubles with *Lolita* is that, so far from being too pornographic, it is not pornographic enough." When he wrote that, his daughter, Sally, was a babe in arms, and now even those

innocuous words seem fraught with implication. This doesn't necessarily alter the case, but neither can I forget Sally's older brother, who wrote,

Parents and guardians of twelve-year-old girls will have noticed that their wards have a tendency to be difficult. They may take Humbert's word for it that things are much more difficult—are in fact entirely impossible—when your twelve-year-old girl is also your twelve-year-old girlfriend. The next time that you go out with your daughter, imagine you are *going out* with your daughter.

When I first read this novel, I had not had the experience of having a twelve-year-old daughter. I have had that experience twice since, which is many times fewer than I have read the novel. I daresay I chortled, in an outraged sort of way, when I first read, "How sweet it was to bring that coffee to her, and then deny it until she had done her morning duty." But this latest time I found myself almost congealed with shock. What about the fatherly visit to the schoolroom, for example, where Humbert is allowed the privilege of sitting near his (wife's) daughter in class:

I unbuttoned my overcoat and for sixty-five cents plus the permission to participate in the school play, had Dolly put her inky, chalky, red-knuckled hand under the desk. Oh, stupid and reckless of me no doubt, but after the torture I had been subjected to, I simply had to take advan-

tage of a combination that I knew would never occur again."

Or this, when the child runs a high fever: "She was shaking from head to toe. She complained of a painful stiffness in the upper vertebrae—and I thought of poliomyelitis as any American parent would. Giving up all hope of intercourse ..."

Forgive me, *hypocrite lecteur*, if I say that I still laughed out loud at the deadpan way in which Nabokov exploded that land mine underneath me. And of course, as Amis *filis* half admits in his words about "parents and guardians," Lolita is *not* Humbert's daughter. If she were, the book probably would have been burned by the hangman, and its author's right hand sliced off and fed to the flames. But, just as Humbert's mind is on a permanent knife-edge of sexual mania, so his creator manages to tread the vertiginous path between incest, by which few are tempted, and engagement with pupating or nymphlike girls, which will not lose its *frisson*. (You will excuse me if, like Humbert, I dissolve into French when euphemism is required.) For me the funniest line in the book—because it is so farcical—comes in the moment after the first motel rape, when the frenzied Humbert, who has assumed at least the authority and disguise of fatherhood, is "forced to devote a dangerous amount of time (was she up to something downstairs?) to arranging the bed in such a way as to suggest the abandoned nest of a restless father and his tomboy daughter, instead of an ex-convict's saturnalia with a couple of fat old whores." None of this absurdity allows us to forget—and Humbert himself does not allow us to forget—that immediately following each and every one of the hundreds of subsequent rapes the little girl weeps for quite a long time ...

How complicit, then, is Nabokov himself? The common joking phrase among adult men, when they see nymphets on the street or in the park or, nowadays, on television and in bars, is "Don't even think about it." But it is very clear that Nabokov *did* think about it, and had thought about it a lot.

An earlier novella, written in Russian and published only after his death—*The Enchanter*—centers on a jeweler who hangs around playgrounds and forces himself into gruesome sex and marriage with a *vachelike* mother, all for the sake of witnessing her death and then possessing and enjoying her twelve-year-old daughter. (I note one correspondence I had overlooked before: the hapless old bag in *The Enchanter* bears many unappetizing scars from the surgeon's knife, and when Humbert scans Lolita's statistics—height, weight, thigh measurements, IQ, and so forth—he discovers that she still has her appendix and says to himself, "Thank God." You do not want to think about *that* for very long either.) And then there is, just once, a hint of incest so elaborate and so deranged that you can read past it, as many critics have, before going back and whistling with alarm.

... the thought that with patience and luck I might have her produce eventually a nymphet with my blood in her exquisite veins, a Lolita the Second, who would be eight or nine around 1960, when I would still be *dans la force d'age*; indeed, the telescoping of my mind, or un-mind, was strong enough to distinguish in the remoteness of time a *vieillard encore vert*—or was it green rot?—bizarre, tender, salivating Dr. Humbert, practicing on supremely lovely Lolita the Third the art of being a granddad.

Arresting, as well as disgusting, to suddenly notice that Lolita (who died giving birth to a stillborn girl, for Christ's sake) would have been seventy this year ... However, I increasingly think that Nabokov's celebrated, and tiresomely repeated, detestation of Sigmund Freud must itself be intended as some kind of acknowledgment. If he thought "the Viennese quack" and "Freudian voodooism" were so useless and banal, why couldn't he stay off the subject, or the subtext?

I could very well do with a little rest in this subdued, frightened-to-death rocking chair, before I drove to wherever the beast's lair was—and then pulled the pistol's foreskin back, and then enjoyed the orgasm of the crushed trigger. I was always a good little follower of the Viennese medicine man ...

NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY JOSEPH O'NEILL

The novel is such a noisy site of formal experimentation that it's easy to undervalue its long-standing, perhaps even quintessential, function as a describer of the bourgeois adventure—roughly speaking, the pursuit of plenitude in matters of love, work, and leisure. Indeed, it is nowadays oddly daring for a real artistic talent (that is, one properly attentive to considerations of language and truthfulness) to "confine" itself to this task. And yet when you read a book like Yael Hedaya's *Accidents*—a fine-grained, tragicomic, and always gripping portrait of adult love in the making—you wonder why so few such books are produced, and why they are not more fanfared.

Of course, any summary of *Accidents* reduces it to banality. Suffice it to say that we are concerned with Yonatan—a widowed middle-aged writer living with his pre-teen daughter, Dana, in a Tel Aviv apartment whose rooms are "pieces in a puzzle of despondency"—and with Shira, a novelist in her mid-thirties whose father is dying. Tel Aviv here is civilized, politically cocooned ("fundamentally, we are a barbaric country, and no amount of ciabattas and focaccias will change that," somebody remarks), and oddly hospitable to the unhurried, incremental passion in which the two chief actors become involved. At any rate, in lieu of a twisting plot (and realistic fiction, one might plausibly argue, should be as uneventful as possible) there is a flow of episodes sustained by the indefinable narrative pressure that signals a work of true imaginative engagement. Hedaya alternates between viewpoints—male and female, adult and adolescent—with unflinching empathy, never ignoring the poetical sparks of the everyday: an impending breakup hovers over a couple "like an ugly chandelier"; a stopping truck makes the sound of a peacock's scream. This book is, in every sense, the real deal.



ACCIDENTS

by Yael Hedaya
Metropolitan Books

Joseph O'Neill is working on his third novel, *The Brooklyn Dream Game*.

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Many a true word is spoken in jest, especially about the kinship between *eros* and *thanatos*. The two closest glimpses Humbert gives us of his own self-hatred are not without their death wish—made explicit in the closing paragraphs—and their excremental aspects: “I am lanky, big-boned, wooly-chested Humbert Humbert, with thick black eyebrows and a queer accent, and a cesspoolful of rotting monsters behind his slow boyish smile.” Two hundred pages later: “The turquoise blue swimming pool some distance behind the lawn was no longer behind that lawn, but within my thorax, and my organs swam in it like excrements in the blue sea water in Nice.” And then there’s the offhand aside “Since (as the psychotherapist, as well as the rapist, will tell you) the limits and rules of such girlish games are fluid ...” in which it takes a moment to notice that “therapist” and “the rapist” are in direct apposition.

Once you start to take a shy hand in the endless game of decoding the puns and allusions and multiple entendres (the Umberto echoes, if I may be allowed) that give this novel its place next to *Ulysses*, you are almost compelled to agree with Freud that the unconscious never lies. Swinburne’s poem *Dolores* sees a young lady (“Our Lady of Pain”) put through rather more than young Miss Haze. Lord Byron’s many lubricities are never far away; in the initial stages of his demented scheme Humbert quotes from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*: “To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee and print on thine soft cheek a parent’s kiss,” and when we look up the lines we find they are addressed to Harold’s absent daughter (who, like Byron’s child and Nabokov’s longest fiction, is named Ada). Humbert’s first, lost girlfriend, Annabel, is perhaps not unrelated to Byron’s first wife, Anne Isabella, who was known as “Annabella,” and she has parents named Leigh, just like Byron’s ravished half-sister Augusta. The Haze family physician, who gives Humbert the sleeping pills with which he drugs Lolita preparatory to the first rape at the Enchanted Hunters Hotel, is named Dr. Byron. And while we are

on the subject of physicians, remember how Humbert is recommended to “an excellent dentist”:

Our neighbor, in fact. Dr. Quilty. Uncle or cousin, I think, of the playwright. Think it will pass? Well, just as you wish. In the fall I shall have him “brace” her, as my mother used to say. It may curb Lo a little.

Another Quilty, with his own distinctive hint of sadism. “Sade’s Justine was twelve at the start,” as Humbert reflects, those three so ordinary words “at the start” packing a huge, even gross, potential weight ... These clues are offset by more innocuous puns (“We had breakfast in the township of Soda, pop 1001”) and by dress rehearsals for puns, as when Humbert decides to decline a possible joke about the Mann Act, which forbids the interstate transport of girls for immoral purposes. (Alexander Dolinin has recently produced a fascinating article on the contemporaneous abduction of a girl named Sally Horner, traces of the reportage of which are to be found throughout *Lolita*.)

All is apparently redeemed, of course, by the atrocious punishment that Nabokov inflicts for this most heinous of humanity’s offenses. The molester in *The Enchanter* was hit by a truck, and Humbert dies so many little deaths—eroding his heart muscles most pitifully—that in some well-wrought passages we almost catch ourselves feeling sorry for him. But the urge to punish a crime (“Why dost thou lash that whore?” Shakespeare makes us ask ourselves in *King Lear*) is sometimes connected to the urge to commit it. Naming a girls’ school for Beardsley must have taken a good deal of reflection, with more Sade than Lewis Carroll in it, but perhaps there is an almost inaudible note of redemption at Humbert and Lolita’s last meeting (the only time, as he ruefully minutes, that she ever calls him “honey”), when “I looked and looked at her, and knew as clearly as I know I am to die, that I loved her more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth, or hoped for anywhere else.”

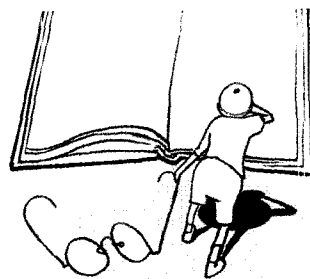
The most unsettling suggestion of all must be the latent idea that nym-

NEW FICTION

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



“The most desirable neighborhoods remained those anchored on Monument Square by big, old two- or three-story houses built in the late 1800s or the early years of the 1900s. For decades those houses were the idea of home that everyone in Washburn held on to no matter where else in town he or she actually lived. After the war, however, the grown children returning to the area found they no longer yearned to acquire or to remain in the spacious, shadowy rooms of those tall houses standing among even taller trees. Shrouded in shady repose, those handsome buildings embodied an old-fashioned approach to living one’s life that nullified the clean rush of postwar urgency. The clipped gables, the spear of a conical tower, the vari-patterned, beautiful but brittle old slate roofs, the gingerbread of a Victorian porch—all the elaborate details—bespoke careful consideration and a ponderous progression that put a damper on a newly roused enthusiasm for getting on with things.” —from **The Truth of the Matter**, by Robb Forman Dew (Little, Brown)

Dew uses concrete detail to animate an abstract concept, achieving a style as solid and direct as the well-intentioned World War II-era midwesterners about whom she writes. Her observation about the height of Washburn’s turn-of-the-century houses, and the way that observation links them to the surrounding trees, emphasizes their rootedness: they move upward rather than forward. Other words nail down their static quality—“remained,” “anchored,” “held on to,” “standing,” “repose.” This she contrasts with the “urgency,” the “rush,” and the “roused enthusiasm” of the new era. The old (Dew repeats that word three times) is “shadowy,” “shrouded,” and “shady,”

while the new is “clean.” As befits their labor-intensiveness, the old houses command all the description, and the language with which Dew interprets the details she presents—“careful consideration” and “ponderous progression”—is fittingly leaden. Meanwhile, the new places to live and the new way of living are still so insubstantial that they can only be gestured at with a loose, vague, casual phrase: “getting on with things.” The fact that progress speeds time has not gone unnoted in literature, but here the old, refreshingly, wields some power—at least to nullify and dampen—if the new does not watch out.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.

phetomania is, as well as a form of sex, a form of love.

Alfred Appel’s most sage advice is to make yourself slow down when reading *Lolita*, not be too swiftly ravished and caught up. Follow this counsel and you will find that—more than almost any other novel of our time—it keeps the promise of genius and never presents itself as the same story twice. I mentioned the relatively obvious way in which it strikes one differently according to one’s age; and if aging isn’t a theme here, with its connotation of death and extinction, then I don’t know what is. But there are other ways in which *Lolita* is, to annex Nabokov’s word, “tele-

scopic.” Looking back on it, he cited a critic who “suggested that *Lolita* was the record of my love affair with the romantic novel,” and continued, “The substitution ‘English language’ for ‘romantic novel’ would make this elegant formula more correct.” That’s profoundly true, and constitutes the most strenuous test of the romantic idea that worshipful time will forgive all those who love, and who live by, language. After half a century this work’s “transgressiveness” makes every usage of that term in our etiolated English departments seem stale, pallid, and domesticated. ▀

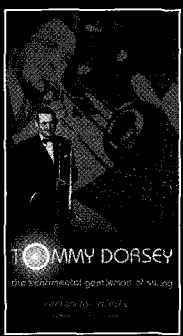
Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic* and a columnist for *Vanity Fair*.

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BOOKS

Serf Advisory

*A practical guide for
hired help, from the eighteenth
century to ours*

BY MONA SIMPSON

Hesperus Press's elegant reissue of Jonathan Swift's slim, unfinished *Directions to Servants* seems particularly relevant now, when servants in America, though they're not typically called servants, are as common in upper-middle-class households as they were in Chekhov's plays. Which of his disillusioned doctors or dreamy heroines could have imagined that in a hundred years we would still be worrying the problems of love and despair while eating meals and sleeping in beds made by serfs? In today's professional class many women work, the men work even more, and the household, if it runs at all, is run by somebody else.

Directions to Servants lacks the central conceit and driving polemic of *A Modest Proposal*, but delivers a gallery of sharp miniatures, in aggregate asserting the eternal spunk, appetite, ultimate dignity, and humanity of servants. The premise is the old, satisfying one of the help outsmarting their masters. At its lowest Swift's humor would appease a nine-year-old boy's cravings for bathroom gags, with slapstick not all that much more sophisticated than the upstairs-downstairs joke of the cook's peeing in the soup. Those moments are brief, though. Swift once wrote to Pope that his aim was "to vex the world rather than divert it," and in these vignettes he's most diverting when he's at least partly serious, which is fortunate, because here in California, at least, with its enormous pool of illegal immigrants, there are numerous unintentionally comic gems in the public library, as funny as Swift's jokes about chamber pots. One is Margaret Storm's *Home Maid*, a Spanish cookbook (first published in the 1960s, when, apparently, "Spanish food" was a synonym for "Mexican food"), with its helpful foreword.



This is *not* a book of Mexican or Spanish recipes. Our aim is not to teach Mexican or Spanish-speaking household help how to make their native dishes. They can do that to perfection without our help. We want to have them help *you* in the kitchen doing things *your* way.

Another is Linda Radke's guide to contemporary domestic employment, subtitled "If the Dog Likes You, You're Hired."

Swift's book takes its form from instruction manuals to servants in a great house. It's broken into many sections, according to job title, and addresses the servant in question directly with specific advice. Swift includes the butler, the cook, the footman, the coachman, the groom, the housekeeper, the chambermaid, the waiting-maid, the housemaid, the children's maid, the nurse, the laundress, the dairymaid, the house steward, the land steward, the porter, and the tutor-ess (notably with only one small paragraph devoted to the caretaking of the great house's children). Today a staff list for a big house on the west side of Los Angeles—while including some overlaps (the housemaid, the laundress, the cook) and a few obvious substitutions (the dog walker replacing the groom, the town-car service replacing the coachman, the gardener and the pool man together replacing the land

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JASON SCHNEIDER

steward)—would minimally require several additions, most involving the pleasure, nurture, and furtherance of the youngest members of the household: first nanny, second nanny, (additional nannies, up to and sometimes exceeding the actual number of children), math tutor, music teacher, swim instructor, sports babysitter, child shrink, “parenting” guru.

In Swift’s day there were many castes of servants—as there are now, though perhaps we’re reluctant to talk about these hierarchies. In contemporary California and New York there’s an abundance of immigrant help—often illegal, hardworking, Spanish-speaking, without driver’s licenses and green cards—and then there’s the *other* kind of help: educated, expensive, and as indistinguishable from the employer as possible. One of the teachers at the private elementary school in Santa Monica my children attend went along to Europe as the “companion” for a television agent’s children; a male babysitter I once tried to hire had to cancel the trial week because his girlfriend wanted him to accompany her to a funeral, which required him to be on Steven Spielberg’s jet rather than at five-pitch practice with my eight-year-old. I’ve learned of more than one family that—upon returning from vacation—has relocated a nanny from Hawaii after the hotel babysitter proved more talented than the one at home.

Before I had children, I heard the occasional complaint about hired help: the Chanel dress, left draped over a chair, that was machine washed and tumble dried by a too-zealous cleaning woman; the housekeeper who sprayed an Ansel Adams mural with Windex. (Fortunately, the owner had two of them.) I once received a call from the friend who’d recommended Nelly, the woman who tidied and scrubbed my apartment every third Wednesday morning; the friend had come to an alarming realization about her forks: only one was left. Another friend to whom she’d referred Nelly, and whom she’d just now called, discovered that she no longer possessed

any spoons. “Check your knives,” my friend advised.

My flatware (which had been nipped from the airlines, so some of my diminutive place settings said both AA and “The Friendly Skies”) remained intact in my dishwasher. Nonetheless, I fired Nelly too, with a vague excuse about traveling a lot. (Nelly recognized the lie for what it was; after all she was often enough the one who packed my suitcase for me.)

Leaving aside the odd fact that though I was twenty-five years old, living on little more than \$9,000 a year in New York City, I employed a cleaning woman, it’s worth mentioning that Nelly did more than clean; she taught me what was wrong with my domestic life at the same time she fixed it. My kitchen floor, for instance, which I’d never realized looked so dismal (wax buildup, I was taught to recognize), needed to be stripped, on hands and knees, and then polished again, into something like grandeur. Even more intimately, Nelly packed ingeniously, everything rolled and tucked and unwrinkled when I took it out.

Why did I employ a cleaning woman when I couldn’t afford health insurance? I paid Nelly to take care of my small apartment because, not unlike Swift’s landed gentry, I didn’t know how to keep house myself and it didn’t seem quite possible to learn. There appeared to be art and magic to it. The paradoxical aspect of my first act of firing was that for years I missed Nelly terribly. I still think about her. This wasn’t guilt. I missed the brilliant floors and origami foldings. In the overall economy of my life a few knives would have been worth the trade.

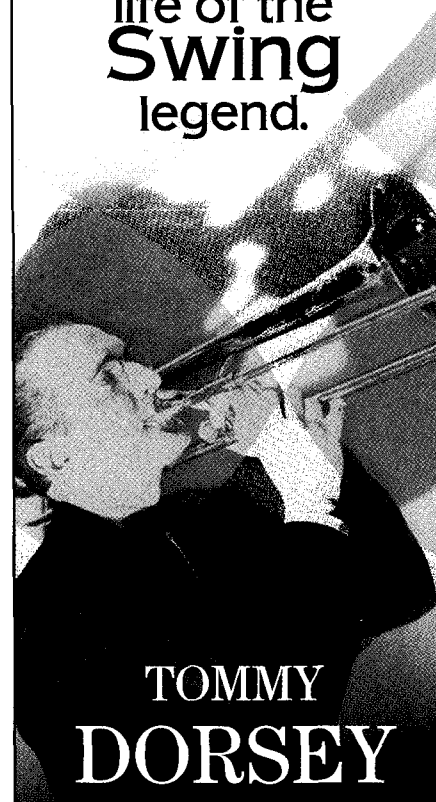
Now that I have children, the conversations I hear about hired help take on a very different tenor. As often as not, women (particularly new mothers) are terrified of losing their nannies, because they have no idea themselves how to get their children to sleep or eat. I heard a woman I’ve always liked say, “I have more nannies than I do children, and I still can’t get anything done.” She was being modest; she gets a great deal done (she produces movies and

DIRECTIONS TO SERVANTS

by Jonathan Swift
Hesperus Press

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FRANCE

Top ten works of nonfiction as of October 2, 2005, from IPSOS, France's leading polling organization.

1. Confessions of a Baby-Boomer, by Thierry Ardisson with Philippe Kieffer. A media personality looks back with wistful cynicism on his hurtle through fame, money, sex and drugs, depression, self-mutilation ... and back again.

2. Manufacturing Cretins: The Inevitable Death of School, by Jean-Paul Brighelli. How does the French educational system (nickname: the Mammoth) turn out dysfunctional French people? Let us count the ways.

3. Confessions, by Patrick Poivre d'Arvor with Serge Raffy. "PPDA"—for twenty-five years France's most-watched, best-loved, oft-loathed television newsreader—tells all.

4. Love in the Blood, by Charlotte Valandrey. A French film star recounts the hidden life she has led since 1987, when she learned she was HIV-positive.

5. For the Love of Massoud, by Sediqa Massoud. The mujahid who loved me—a memoir by the widow of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the anti-Soviet and anti-Taliban guerrilla who was assassinated two days before 9/11.

6. What Do You Learn in Pre-School? *French Ministry of National Education.* A user's guide to the Mammoth—by the Mammoth.

7. What Do You Learn in Elementary School? *French Ministry of National Education.* More from the Mammoth.

8. French Literature for Dummies, by Jean-Joseph Julaud. The French incarnation of the popular American book series.

9. Chirac Stands Accused, by Denis Jeambar. A seasoned journalist puts the president of France in the dock to answer for a political lifetime of corruption, hypocrisy, and spinelessness.

10. The Diary of Yalda, by Yalda Rahimi with Marion Ruggieri. A seventeen-year-old Afghan girl's bittersweet journey to Paris and a new life.

—CHARLES TRUEHEART

collects American antiques—she once found a Christmas tree made entirely of chicken feathers—and in her spare time makes stationery for friends on a hand letterpress).

My Santa Monica jeweler told me last December that he did more business with women coming in for their nannies' presents than with men shopping for their mistresses, mothers, daughters, and wives put together. For generations women have been puzzling over the ethics and etiquette of "having" help. The very verb is troubling—what boys of my generation said about the girls they'd laid—because "help" has traditionally *helped* us with what is still, no matter the opinion of weekly newsmagazines and polite company, our responsibility first and last. Though most men I know certainly no longer assume that housework and child care are exclusively or even primarily their wives' responsibility (and play with their children far more than their fathers ever did), I've seen very few of those same men at the nurse's station midday, leading a sick child to the Passat station wagon to be taken home.

The ubiquitous Colm Tóibín, noting in his introduction that Swift remained "all of his life unsure of his own status," writes,

In the household of Sir William Temple where he had lived as a young man, his duties included reading aloud to his patron and keeping the household accounts. Temple's nephew, who did not like him, later insisted that Swift was not allowed to sit at table with the family.

Growing up in Los Angeles, I entered many mansions through the service door. My mother was a speech therapist who sometimes worked in private houses and took me along. Like Swift never literally a servant, I nevertheless understood instinctively that the child of the person being paid must take the smaller piece of cake and put up with a few kicks. It wasn't a big deal in my childhood (private families only constituted extra work for my mother; her primary job was teaching stroke

victims in convalescent hospitals to talk again), but it left me more impudent than independent.

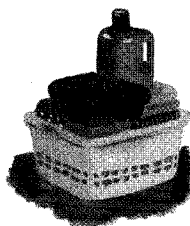
Of course, the real slave is never the one to talk. The darker reaches of servitude, the shame internalized when we clean up after others for money, the combined feelings of humiliation and fury and stubborn blockage (what Chekhov meant when he said "it will be many years before the slave is beaten out of us"), are for the most part left out of Swift's guide. It's a celebration of pluck and wit, and Swift doesn't delve—as did Primo Levi, for instance—into the souls of those whose lives are shaped by others' control and need.

Yet the strongest chord in the book sounds when Swift approaches these painful matters—as here, in his advice to the footman:

Be not proud in prosperity. You have heard that fortune turns on a wheel; if you have a good place, you are at the top of the wheel. Remember how often you have been stripped and kicked out of doors; your wages are taken up beforehand and spent in translated red-heeled shoes, second-hand toupées, and repaired lace ruffles, besides a swingeing debt to the alewife and the brandy-shop. The neighbouring tapster, who before would beckon you over to a savoury bit of ox-cheek in the morning, give it to you gratis, and only score you up for the liquor; immediately after you were packed off in disgrace, carried a petition to your master to be paid out of your wages, whereof not a farthing was due, and then pursued you with bailiffs into every blind cellar. Remember how soon you grew shabby, threadbare and out at heels; was forced to borrow an old livery coat to make your appearance while you were looking for a place, and sneak to every house where you have an old acquaintance to steal you a scrap, to keep life and soul together, and, upon the whole, were in the lowest station of life, which, as the old ballad says, is that of a skip-kennel turned out of place. I say remember all this now, in your flourishing condition.

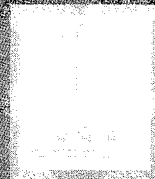
Swift remembered. He remembered all his life. ▀

Mona Simpson is the author of four novels, including Anywhere But Here and Off Keck Road.



2005

SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS



An awards program of Atlantic Media Company—
publisher of *Government Executive*, *The Atlantic*, and
National Journal—and the Partnership for Public Service



"The purpose of life is not to be happy.
It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate,
to have it make some difference that you
have lived and lived well."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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2005 SERVICE TO AMERICA

Government's Vital Role

During the past three years, Service to America Medals have been conferred on twenty-six individuals and teams for contributions to public service they have made while working for the federal government. This year, nine more join the roster of honorees.

Government rarely is celebrated for the work it does. Indeed, it is more often the target of complaints about policies and performance, as has been the case during the past year with the pacification of Iraq and the response to Hurricane Katrina.

But government remains indispensable, relied upon, for better or worse, to respond to disasters and emergencies and to deliver a wide array of other vital services. The medal winners this year remind us of civil servants' important work in health research and disease prevention, combating discrimination in the workplace, exploring the frontiers of interplanetary space, working abroad to better the lives of foreign citizens, securing the nation against those who mean us harm, and collecting the revenues we need to achieve these and all the other purposes of our common enterprise.

The Service to America Medals program is a joint undertaking of three magazines — *Government Executive*, *The Atlantic*, and *National Journal*—and of the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing the federal workforce. The magazines and their readers, who are interested in deep reporting about national affairs, share a sustained focus on the public sector. The Partnership's purpose is to help federal agencies with workforce challenges, in part by seeking to interest more young Americans in joining the civil service.

This supplement profiling the 2005 SAM winners will be published in the three magazines, which are owned by Atlantic Media Company. Their stories will reach more than one million readers.

Featured are the nine people honored this year:

Orlando Figueroa, the "Mars Czar," whose work helped bring the nation compelling images and scientific information about the Red Planet.

Barbara Turner, whose long career at the Agency for International Development has given her many opportunities to bring America's generosity to suffering people in other nations.

Kevin McAleenan, who developed federal protocols for border security in cases of elevated threat levels or specific intelligence about terrorists.

Steven D. Bice, whose longtime concern about bioterrorism led to the creation of a national stockpile of medicines for rapid dispersal in an emergency.

Alan Estevez, whose work with radio frequency identification technology is bringing the right stuff at the right time to soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines deployed around the world.

Tobin J. Bradley, a young Foreign Service officer who was an early architect of voting systems developed to bring democracy to Iraq.

Subhashree Madhavan, whose cancer research team has developed a revolutionary database linking clinical records with researchers looking for cures.

Terence Lutes, who has played an important role in deploying the electronic filing technologies that now are used by more than half of American taxpayers to file their tax returns.

Elizabeth Grossman, who took on Wall Street's establishment with a successful gender discrimination complaint against Morgan Stanley.

Timothy B. Clark
Editor, *Government Executive*



2005 SERVICE TO AMERICA

A Top-Notch Field

The Service to America program honors achievements in the federal service.

A panel of national leaders selected nine winners, including the Federal Employee of the Year, from a group of thirty finalists in eight categories. Winners and finalists were chosen from among 531 nominees.

2005 FINALISTS

Career Achievement

- **James H. Fall III**, Deputy assistant secretary for technical assistance policy, Office of International Affairs, Treasury Department
- **James Jeffrey**, Deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad, State Department
- **John Schelberg**, Archaeologist, Albuquerque, N.M., Army Corps of Engineers

Call to Service

- **Lynn Clements**, Attorney adviser, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- **Patrick Forrest**, Presidential management fellow, Department of Housing and Urban Development
- **Bill Hindman**, Aerospace research engineer, Albuquerque, N.M., Air Force

Homeland Security

- **Allen Gina**, Executive director, Container Security Initiative Division, Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security Department
- **Jim Williams and team**, Director, US VISIT program, Border and Transportation Security, Homeland Security Department

National Security

- **Thomas Flaherty**, Survivor assistance program manager, Arlington, Va., Air Force
- **Dave Gabel**, Integrated product team leader, Pentagon Renovation and Construction Program Office, Defense Department
- **Christopher Hillenbrand**, Engineer, Newport, R.I., unmanned surface vehicles customer advocate, Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Navy

International Affairs

- **Susan Cantor and the Falcon investigation team**, Supervisory special agent, Newark, N.J., Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau, Homeland Security Department
- **Jeffrey Drummond**, Chief of the Program Operations Division, Agency for International Development

Science and Environment

- **Robert Davis**, Meteorologist, Moon Township, Pa., National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce Department
- **Gloria Kulesa**, Aviation Weather Research Program lead, Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Department

Social Services

- **Computers for Learning team led by Coral Childs**, Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration
- **Robert Otto**, Chief technology officer, U.S. Postal Service
- **Dennis Wagner and team members Virginia McBride, Jade Perdue, Donald Coleman, and Renee Dupee**, Director and leadership team, Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative, Health and Human Services Department

Justice and Law Enforcement

- **Robert Henoeh**, Assistant U.S. attorney, Brooklyn, N.Y., Justice Department
- **Ed Kacerosky**, Supervisory special agent, Miami, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Department
- **Paul McCabe**, FBI special agent, Minneapolis, Justice Department

2005 Selection Committee

Prominent national leaders from the business, academic, political, media, and entertainment communities selected the Service to America medal honorees.

Susan V. Berresford
President, The Ford Foundation

Jonathan Bush
Chairman and CEO, J. Bush & Co.

Timothy B. Clark
Editor and president, Government Executive

Anderson Cooper
Anchor, CNN

Rep. Danny K. Davis, D-Ill.
Ranking member, Federal Workforce and Agency Organization Subcommittee of the Government Reform Committee

Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va.
Chairman, Government Reform Committee

Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill.
Senate Democratic whip

Daniel R. Glickman
President and CEO, Motion Picture Association of America

Colleen M. Kelley
National president, National Treasury Employees Union

Margo Lion
Executive producer, Hairspray

Gov. Tom Ridge
Former secretary, Homeland Security Department

Ruth Simmons
President, Brown University

Max Stier
President and CEO, Partnership for Public Service

Judy Woodruff
Journalist

For information on the Service to America Medals, including nominations for the 2006 awards, go to www.servicetoamericamedals.org.

This supplement was produced by the staff of *Government Executive* magazine, a publication of Atlantic Media Company.

TO THOSE WHO LEAD BY EXAMPLE.



We are honored to salute you — the dedicated federal employees who exemplify the best in the American spirit. Your expertise and creativity contribute immensely to the fulfillment of missions that are crucial to our country. As we recognize your achievements, we would like to add two words that you do not hear often enough: thank you.

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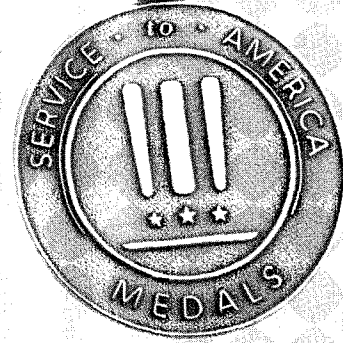


FEDERAL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

The Mars Czar

Orlando Figueroa doesn't own a telescope,
but he dreams about the day
scientists find signs of life on Mars

By Beth Dickey



The first weeks of 2004 were trying times for Orlando Figueroa. One of the twin mobile robots that landed on Mars in January wasn't functioning properly. Figueroa, the director of NASA's Mars Exploration Program at the time, was worried sick. After a six-month journey from Earth and only eighteen days on the surface of the Red Planet, the mobile geologist named Spirit had clammed up. The remotely operated, six-wheeled rover wasn't talking to its earthbound controllers about much of anything, particularly its health.

The \$800 million Mars Exploration Rover missions launched in June and July 2003 had been on a fast track—only three years in the making. Figueroa was the “daddy” of Spirit and its sibling, Opportunity, having set policy and managed resources and assets for the Mars program from shortly after the project's inception.

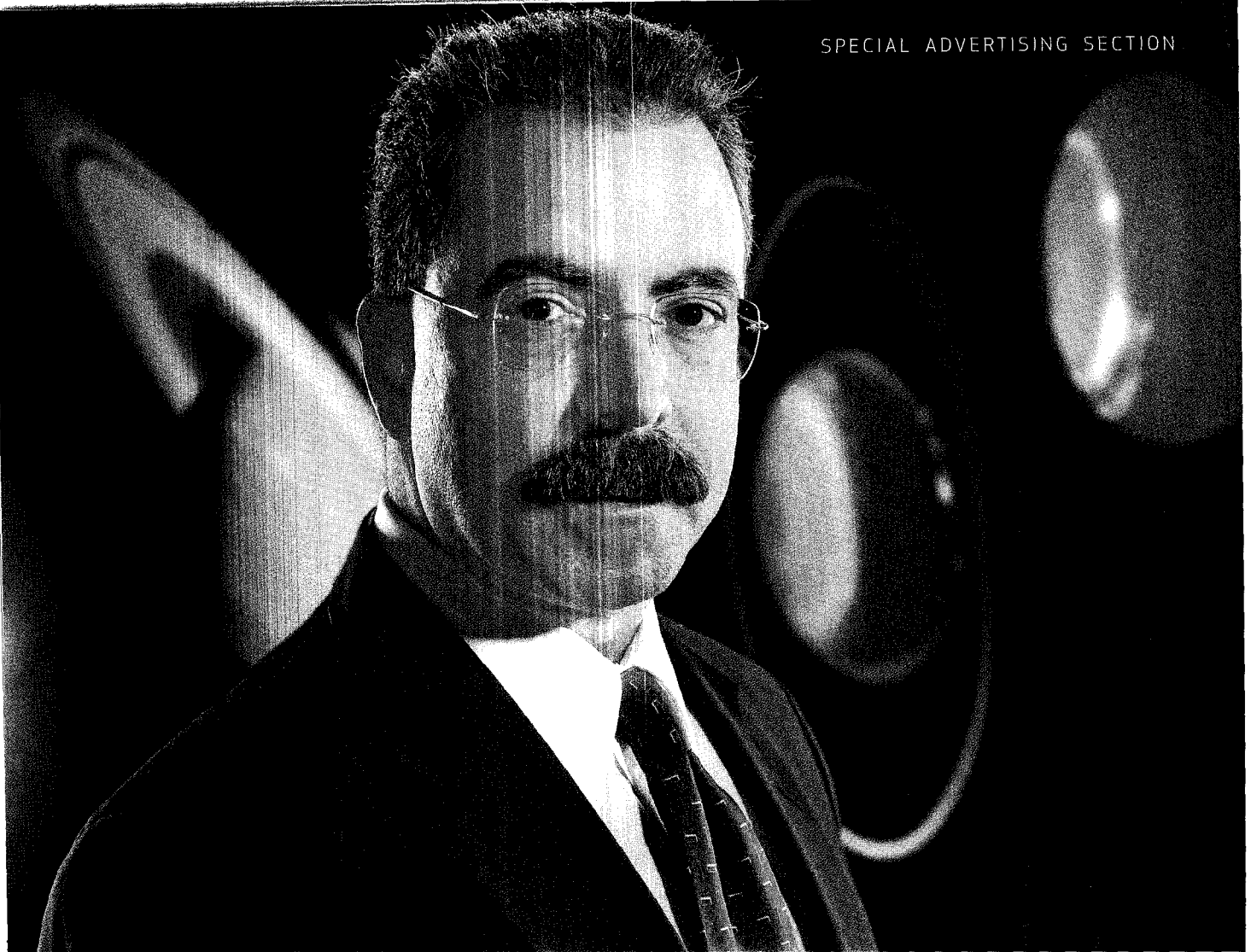
He thought back to the ignominious mishaps with two faster and much cheaper

probes at Mars in 1999, and he feared the worst.

Those missions were doomed by skimpy budgets, poor communication, and inadequate testing and oversight. Had a fatal design flaw been overlooked again? Was there some “infant mortality” problem that could render not one machine inoperative, but both? A distinguished twenty-six-year space agency career flashed before Figueroa's eyes.

It took two days, but engineers discovered a problem in the first rover's software. Just hours before Opportunity's arrival on the opposite side of the planet, they found a way to communicate with Spirit and stop its computer from rebooting more than a dozen times a day. Eventually, they got the golf-cart-sized machine running again. Within a week, says Figueroa, “My two babies were healthy, taking their first steps, talking and interacting.”

From Washington, Figueroa and several other program executives and scientists provided top-level direction to a team of 600 civil servants and contractors operating the rover missions from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. He paid “a premium,” he says, for dedication and focus, honest and direct communication, and a clear line of authority. “They knew that under my watch we were going to pay attention and



penetrate as deeply as we had to . . . to avoid problems," he says.

Figueroa also prodded NASA to contract with outside Internet services to make sure its Web portal could hold up under a crush of public attention. He knows the value of educational outreach, having been inspired as a boy by a NASA program broadcast on television in his native Puerto Rico in the 1960s. The Mars Exploration Program Web site took nine billion hits from hundreds of millions of users in the first three months of the rovers' adventure.

Figueroa was promoted in July 2004 and spent a little more than a year as associate deputy administrator for science programs. As such, he left his mark on the development of three missions to the Red Planet, includ-

ing the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, launched in August to take close-up pictures, scout landing sites, and establish the first link

life. "We have learned on Earth that life can be so tenacious and perseverant," he says. "We will certainly find evidence of the early stages of life, if not life itself, on Mars."

In September, Figueroa moved on to a new assignment as director of safety and mission assurance at Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, where his career began in 1978.

He still follows the activities of the rovers, which have trundled on for more than a year beyond their expected ninety-day lifetimes. "They have shown us a new and far more interesting Mars. They have blown away every engineering theory we had about

predicting their life, and they are still teaching us about operational efficiencies for future generations of rovers," he says.

"They knew that under my watch we were going to pay attention and penetrate as deeply as we had to . . . to avoid problems."

—Orlando Figueroa

in an interplanetary Internet.

He doesn't own a telescope, but he does dream about the day scientists find signs of



CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

Going the Distance

Barbara Turner has carried U.S. aid across the globe

By Shane Harris

Barbara Turner's four decades with the federal government embody perseverance, achievement, and public service that would be hard to match in the private sector, especially in today's world of frequent career changes. She worked her way from the lowest rungs to the highest, and along the way made a big difference in people's lives.

During her years in government, Turner traversed a wide territory. As a young health officer in Egypt in the 1980s, she helped implement a new approach to fighting childhood

ty ownership. She led a mission to war-torn Sarajevo only six weeks after the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995. And recently, she helped promote the Global Development Alliance, which has matched up about \$500 million in AID funds with \$2.5 billion in private-sector resources.

"Barbara is first and foremost a leader," says AID administrator Andrew Natsios. "No single officer in the agency has had the impact she has had over the course of her career."

Turner, fifty-seven, began her government career forty years ago as a part-time typing clerk on high school break in northern Virginia. She was a GS-2. A job opened in 1966 at AID that was full time and offered a promotion, so she took it. She was struck by the influence U.S. assistance could have on people's lives. In 1974, she traveled to Afghanistan, where AID ran a large public health program. Mostly, she says, "I went to help." The seed was planted, and in 1977, Turner took her first leave from government, to earn a public health degree at Johns Hopkins University.

Save for two relatively brief leaves of absence—one to earn the master's and then a two-year unpaid stint as a senior health adviser at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York—she stayed in government and steadily climbed the ranks. Most of that time was at AID, working on programs and in offices devoted to a range of foreign aid, and ending up in one of the highest positions at the agency. When she left AID and the federal government in July, she was the deputy assistant administrator in the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination and a member of the Senior Executive Service.

"I think it's hard to have a better job than in government, where you really do have an opportunity to have a broad-reaching impact," she says. "Very few private-sector jobs are going to offer you that."



disease, particularly dehydration caused by diarrhea. Today, oral rehydration therapy, which consists of giving parched children a solution of water, salt, and sugar, is credited with saving countless lives. She helped pioneer the Agency for International Development's work in the former Soviet Union, educating the citizenry about free markets and proper-



CALL TO SERVICE

On Watch

When threat levels rise, Kevin McAleenan, Customs and Border Protection's anti-terrorism chief, works to make Americans breathe easier

By Amelia Gruber

Kevin McAleenan saw nearly four years of work come together in the hours after the London subway bombings in July.

As director of the Customs and Border Protection bureau's Office of Anti-Terrorism, he orchestrates the bureau's response to elevated threat levels or specific intelligence, and coordinates with the rest of the Homeland Security Department.

McAleenan has navigated through seven orange-level alerts since November 2001, when he arrived in Washington fresh from a Silicon Valley corporate law firm. "Before, it was . . . staying here all night and a couple key people just working the issue to death, that's how we got through it," he says. But the response after London was "seamless," he says. In a day, his office reviewed intelligence, presented response options to Commissioner Robert Bonner, and, after getting the go-ahead, implemented the response in the field.

After the 9/11 attacks, McAleenan felt so strongly about getting involved in anti-terrorism that within weeks, he left the law job he'd taken to pay off his student loans and headed

to CBP. He worked his way up to acting director of counterterrorism in 2003 and to director the next year.

Before 9/11, the border agencies focused on counternarcotics, spotting trade fraud and intellectual property rights violations, and preventing illegal border crossings. They had no anti-terrorism office and no uniform procedures for questioning suspected terrorists. McAleenan developed those protocols.

The protocols are working, Bonner says. One suspected terrorist turned away by CBP later perpetrated a large suicide bombing in Iraq. "We denied him admission," Bonner says. "Now why did that happen? That's partly Kevin and what he's done."

He also worked on programs to target inspections on high-risk containers at ports and procedures for determining whether materials that set off sensitive radiation detectors—which can send out alarms for anything from kitty litter or bananas to enriched uranium—are harmful.

But McAleenan is loath to take credit. "If you really want to know what I'm proudest of, it's . . . building a team that comes in committed every day to the mission and understands that they're making a difference on a national level," he says.



JAMES KEGLEY



HOMELAND SECURITY

An Ounce of Prevention

Steven D. Bice, guardian of the national pharmaceutical stockpile,
lands on the front lines of the terrorism war

By Katherine McIntire Peters

In the late 1990s, before anthrax became a household word, before U.S. Postal Service officials feared becoming a tool of terrorists and the extent of the collapsed Soviet Union's germ research program was widely understood, and long after most Americans thought smallpox was a relic of the past, Steven D. Bice worried about bioterrorism. Then a public health analyst for the Emergency Response Coordination Group at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, he wrote a paper advocating the creation of a national stockpile of drugs and medical materiel that could be rapidly dispersed in an emergency.

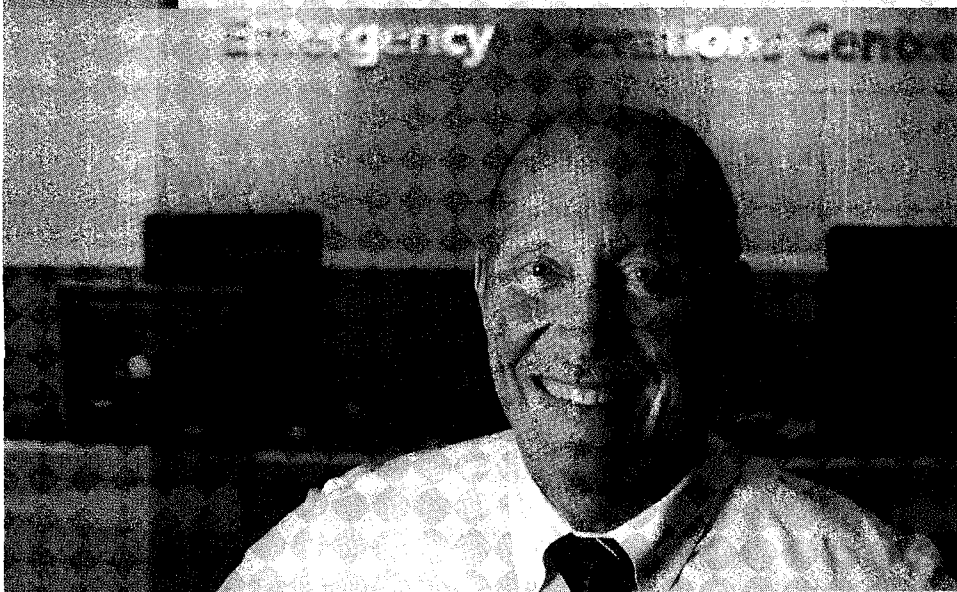
The paper eventually found its way to the top of the agency and into the hands of congressional staff. CDC already had established small teams that would respond to national medical disasters. "The paper was simply the next step—how would we prepare ourselves if we had to treat 100,000 people or one million people for any one disease that was orchestrated, engineered, and perpetrated by human beings? The only logical way was to think in terms of a stockpile," Bice says.

CDC officials were surprised to discover they had been awarded \$50 million to create a national pharmaceutical stockpile in their 1999 budget. Bice was tapped to design and direct the program.

"There weren't any great stockpile models," Bice says. The Defense and Veterans Affairs Departments, which historically had experience in stockpiling drugs, had gone to just-in-time delivery systems to cut costs and manage inventories efficiently. Hospital groups had done the same. "Nobody had any great on-hand stock," he says.

Bice quickly discovered that \$50 million doesn't go far in the pharmaceutical marketplace, so CDC partnered with Veterans Affairs to leverage buying power.

On December 27, 1999, the first "push packs" of medicine and equipment were ready for distribution in the event that Y2K computer failures triggered medical crises. The threat never materialized, but the stockpile was born. Within weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the annual budget for the stockpile rocketed to \$645 million, and the former Army infantry officer who honed his leadership and management skills on the battlefield in Vietnam found himself in charge of a major campaign in the war on terrorism.





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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Rocking the Vote

Foreign service officer Tobin J. Bradley
helped Iraqis choose ballots over bullets

By Katherine McIntire Peters

Last January, despite dire predictions of violence, millions of Iraqis defied conventional wisdom and turned out to vote in the first free national election in fifty years. Triumphant Iraqis of every creed showed off fingers stained with indelible purple ink, a hedge against voter fraud that became a potent symbol of hope across a troubled region.

The historic balloting was not a foregone conclusion in post-invasion Iraq. While world leaders in late 2003 were debating the

public office in the south. His work demonstrated that the national ration-card system could serve as a method to validate eligible voters and that conservative Iraqis could be convinced to allow women to vote.

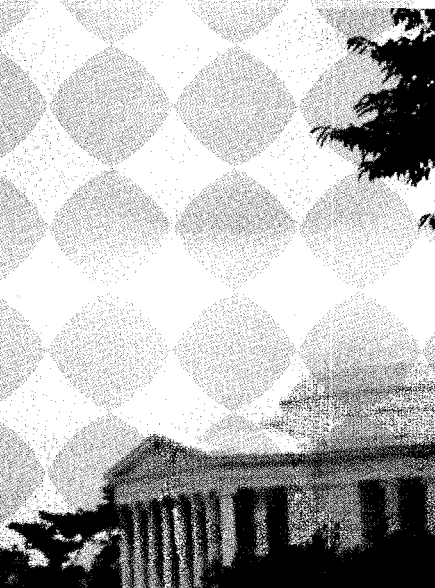
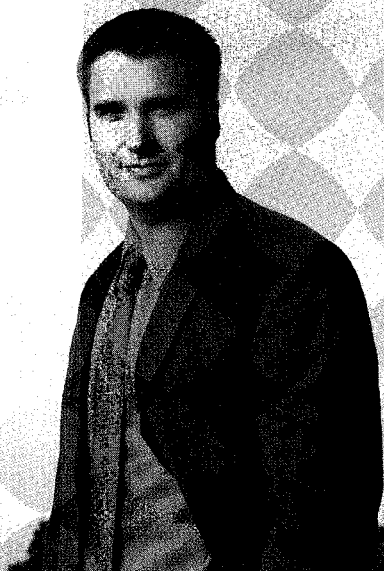
An Arabic speaker whose language skills were honed during a two-year assignment in Jordan, Bradley volunteered for service in Iraq in the summer of 2003, leaving what a colleague called a "plush" assignment in Brussels. He arrived in Iraq in September and quickly found himself in Dhi Qar province working as the U.S. liaison for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

It was a daunting assignment: "We had hundreds of people coming to our door. They needed jobs, water, electricity. There were property disputes, labor disputes . . . What I was really doing was facilitating the Iraqi dialogue that wasn't able to occur under Saddam," Bradley says. With his indispensable language skills, the son of the city manager of Cathedral City, California, was able to draw on years of dinner-table tutorials about managing city operations and balancing conflicting interests.

Bradley traveled throughout the province meeting with local interest groups and organizing elections. The work was difficult, all-consuming, and immensely gratifying, he says. At times, it was also extraordinarily dangerous. In one harrowing situation, the CPA compound in Nasariyah was under siege by militia loyal to Moqtada al Sadr. When military intervention seemed imminent, Bradley, fervently working the phones with his local contacts, negotiated a settlement of sorts, likely sparing the city substantial violence.

"At that moment, I was afraid if I didn't do the right thing a lot of people would die," he says. Bradley remains hopeful about Iraq: "I've seen democracy work there."

feasibility of direct national elections, Tobin J. Bradley, a twenty-nine-year-old Foreign Service officer living in a tent in the Dhi Qar province in southern Iraq, was busy organizing voting in cities across the south. Bradley organized fifteen direct local elections, including one that brought the first woman to



NATIONAL SECURITY

Supply Master

Alan Estevez is making sure every military service member has exactly the right equipment at the right time—no more and no less

By Beth Dickey

A year ago, agents from the Government Accountability Office paid an Internet liquidator \$483 for forty-two pairs of cold-weather boots that had cost the Defense Department \$5,670, or \$135 each.

The footwear, still new, had been written off as junk when it appeared at a Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office in California without identifying paperwork. Not long afterward, the Defense Logistics Agency ordered 31,420 new pairs of the same boots. As the GAO reported in June, this is just one example of the \$3.5 billion worth of new or barely used supplies and equipment that the military declared surplus from 2002 through 2004, then spent at least \$400 million to replace.

Alan Estevez is out to end such horror stories by helping military logisticians know the precise location and condition of everything they buy. An expert on radio frequency identification and its use for inventory management, Estevez believes duplicative purchases are "the biggest failure" of the military distribution and disposal system.

Luckily for the Pentagon, Estevez is the assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for supply chain integration. For two years, he's been prodding the services and their 60,000 suppliers to encode shipments with identifiers for an electronic inventory database. Use of wireless RFID tagging, which the Pentagon helped develop, is coming into vogue among retailers. Says Estevez: "If you're Wal-Mart, then you want to know what's on the shelves and in the backroom and ready to move out ... In the military, it's the same."

Wal-Mart requires its top suppliers to stick tags on cases and pallets bound for sixteen distribution centers serving more than 600 stores nationwide. In a parallel policy initiative, Estevez requires the same tags at depots in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania, and San Joaquin, California. By January, the directive will expand to thirty-two more. January 2007 is the deadline for full compliance.

Even at that point, the technology will need to be perfected and global standards set up. And there's no guarantee of major cost savings yet. But Estevez doesn't concern himself with the numbers. "It's the kids we send into harm's way," he says. "If we're not doing this to make their lives easier, we should go do something else."



DAVID HILLS

SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Brain Power

**Subhashree Madhavan and the Rembrandt project team
fight a killer with a "killer app"**

By Shane Harris

Subhashree Madhavan spends her days tracking a killer. Last year, cancer surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death among people under the age of eighty-five in the United States. Brain tumors specifically are stalking the young, and now are the leading cause of cancer-related death in children under eighteen, the third-leading cause for males eighteen to fifty-four and the fourth-leading cause for women eighteen to thirty-four.

ing breakthrough treatments, has been a lack of information-sharing between clinicians and researchers.

Madhavan leads a team, drawn from several clinical and research disciplines, that many believe will take down those historical barriers. The team's secret weapon is called Rembrandt, the Repository for Molecular Brain Neoplasia Data. In the simplest sense, Rembrandt is the fullest and most analytically powerful database on brain tumors ever assembled. It marries data from hundreds of brain tumor patients—the clinical side of the puzzle—with molecular and genetic data about many types of tumors. With a few clicks of a mouse and a little data entry, just about anyone can find potentially groundbreaking information about how tumors behave.

For Madhavan, the fight plays out on a personal level. Some of her relatives have been struck with brain cancer. When she came to the National Cancer Institute in January 2004, she found herself working with a former colleague, Peter Covitz. The pair had been researchers at a biotechnology firm, and shortly after arriving at the institute were approached by a leading clinical investigator, Dr. Howard Fine, who wanted to find a way to merge those two important tumor data sets. It seemed like a "perfect fit," Madhavan recalls, an opportunity to build what software engineers call "the killer app," an application that hasn't existed before and has the potential for widespread appeal.

But Madhavan and others see Rembrandt as more than just a killer new program. Cancer researchers hope it will advance the field of research altogether, from "bench to bedside," Madhavan says, by instilling a team approach to finding a cure. "Technology is just a means," she says. "It's not the end."

Scientists have only begun to unravel the biology of tumors. What makes a tumor tick can be so precise that, if it can be understood, a specialist could recommend a specific treatment, perhaps one that's unique to a single patient. But one of the biggest barriers to harnessing that information, and thus find-

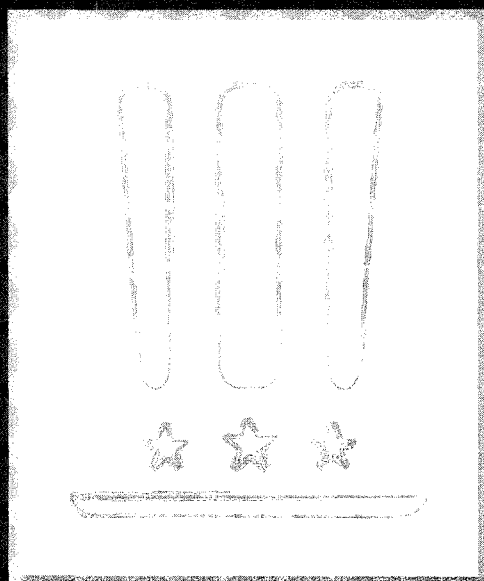


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SOCIAL SERVICES

Tax Crusader

**Because of Terence Lutes, today
most taxpayers file electronically**

By Kimberly Palmer

When Terence Lutes was trying to convince taxpayers to file electronically in early 2002, he and his team launched an ad campaign featuring a lone employee working late at the office while his wife waited patiently at home. The message: If you'd e-filed your returns, you'd be done by now.

Apparently it worked. This year, for the first time, more than half of all taxpayers filed electronically. The associate chief information officer at the Internal Revenue Service,

burdensome until Lutes and his team instituted electronic signatures, online payment, and Free File, which allowed those who qualify to file electronically at no cost through tax-preparing companies.

"It was the greatest turnaround that I ever saw of a problem headed for a train wreck," says former IRS commissioner Charles Rossotti of the tense negotiations between the IRS and tax service companies over Free File. "The only person standing up for the taxpayer was Terry Lutes."

Both industry and government leaders say Lutes transformed an adversarial relationship into a productive, cordial one. "We treated them like bratty teenagers and were always trying to catch them at stuff, and they thought we were slow, plodding bureaucrats," says Stephen Holden, assistant professor of information systems at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and a former colleague at the IRS. "That all changed with Terry," he says.

As director of the Electronic Tax Administration, Lutes, who graduated from Eastern Kentucky University, frequently spoke to industry groups and asked for feedback on ideas. He even took the occasional weekend phone call while coaching his son's baseball game.

For Lutes, e-filing is important not only because it saves the agency nearly \$2 per return. "What taxpayer cares if they save the IRS \$2? We really focus on the benefit to the taxpayers," says Lutes. Those benefits include getting refunds faster and reducing errors that result in mailing notices to taxpayers.

Without Lutes, says Eddie Feinstein, a retired vice president of H&R Block, "instead of having tens of millions of returns filed today, we would have been a lot slower."

Lutes also persuaded tax service companies like H&R Block and Intuit Inc. to promote the system. "It's no different than when an Amazon teams up with a Toys 'R Us or Nordstrom," the twenty-eight-year IRS veteran says.

Taxpayers have been able to file electronically since the mid-1980s, but the process was





JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Voice of Equality

Women's advocate Elizabeth Grossman takes on Wall Street in her fight against gender discrimination

By Kimberly Palmer

When Elizabeth Grossman, acting regional attorney in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's New York District office, learned that Allison Schieffelin was the victim of gender discrimination at Morgan Stanley investment bank, she suspected Schieffelin wasn't the only one. Along with a team of lawyers and investigators, Grossman tracked down other women who had been denied pay and promotions because of their gender. Last year, EEOC and Morgan Stanley settled the lawsuit for a record-breaking \$54 million.

"Some people have a sense that what you're seeing is just not all of it. They . . . realize that there were other victims," says James Lee, EEOC deputy general counsel. Grossman is that kind of attorney, he says.

While the Morgan Stanley case landed her photo in the *New York Times*, Grossman started turning heads in 1995 when she represented fifteen female employees who were sexually harassed by the chief executive of cosmetics

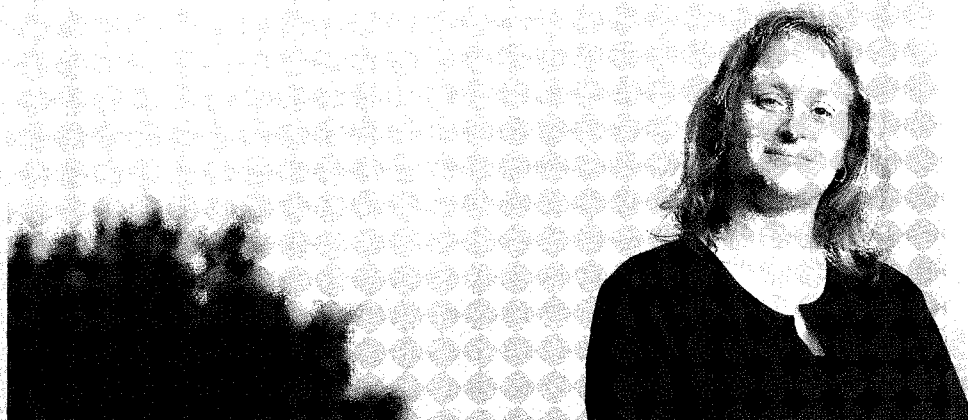
maker Del Laboratories Inc. in Uniondale, New York. The case was settled for more than \$1 million, the largest sexual harassment settlement on record at the time.

"I know it had a huge effect on other people coming forward," says Grossman. The thirty-eight-year-old joined EEOC shortly after graduating from the University of Michigan's law school. She says working in government enables her to focus on eradicating discrimination without getting distracted by the profit needs of a private law firm.

Grossman's settlements almost always include a training component. In the Morgan Stanley case, \$2 million went to diversity programs at the firm. She says she thinks the financial services industry reexamined its promotion and pay practices. "Every indication I've gotten tells me yes, the industry changed because of that," she says.

Women's rights have always been important to Grossman, but she's also working on several cases involving employers' English-only rules in the workplace. She says the rules constitute discrimination based on nationality.

"My parents encouraged me to value diversity and fairness . . . I've tried to keep those priorities," she says.



JAMES KEGLEY



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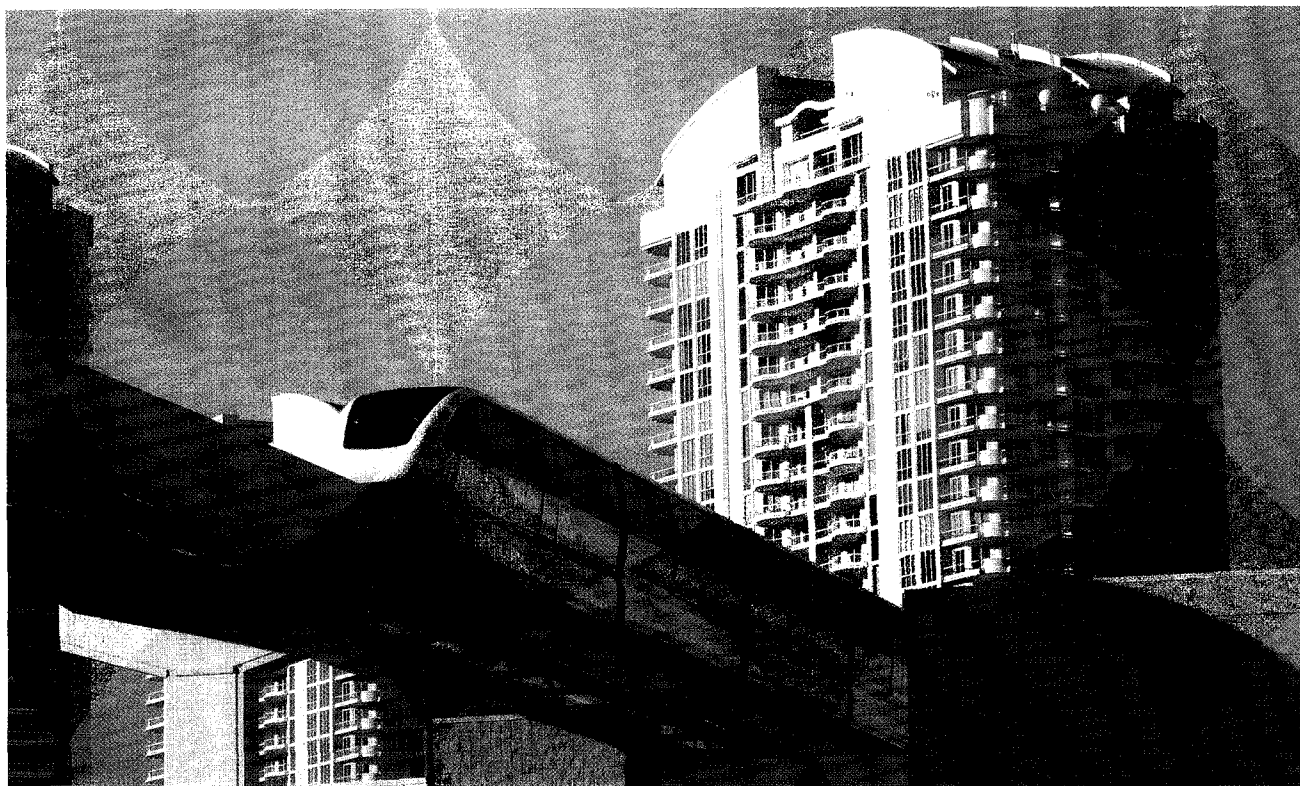
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TRAVELS

Back to the Future

Which way is the new Las Vegas Monorail heading?

BY WAYNE CURTIS

Las Vegas is the Los Alamos of urban design, the nation's leading laboratory for experimenting with how our cities will look and function a half century from now. Among the questions currently under investigation: How much fake do Americans want and what kinds of fake do they prefer? How high and how far can celebrity-chef franchise dining go? How will hybrid hotel-condos actually work on a city-wide level? How do you build a compact, pedestrian-friendly city around what amounts to a short but congested ten-lane highway?

Howard Hughes was right. He said Las Vegas could be a "city of the

future," setting a course for the rest of America. (Hughes envisioned a "super environmental" city free of smog and run by an enlightened local government—but whatever.) When I read that Las Vegas had opened a new monorail system last year to whisk travelers up and down the Strip, my first thought was, Of course: all cities of the future have monorails.

My second thought was, When can I ride it? Those of us who came of age making pilgrimages to Disney's Tomorrowland know that monorails produce a complicated nostalgia for the future. For me the very word "monorail" triggers a slightly faded Tech-

nicolor reverie in which my back yard has its own helipad and my wife, Zorga, wears a silver body suit and sports a stiffly epoxied hairdo that resembles an inverted chafing dish. So when I visited Las Vegas in September, it wasn't the buffets or the baccarat tables that lured me out of my hotel room before I had even unpacked. It was the prospect of a monorail ride. I made my way over to the nearest station, paid my three dollars, and hopped on the next train, uncertain whether I was bound for the past or the future.

This much most people agree on when it comes to monorails: they run on a single rail. The trains can sit on top of the rail, as they do in Las Vegas, Seattle, and the Disney theme parks, or they can be suspended underneath, as they were at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Kim Pedersen, the founder and president of the 4,300-member Monorail Society, is driven to

RON NIEBRUGG

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distraction by people who indiscriminately talk about "monorails" that aren't any such thing. Seattle has a monorail, he says; Detroit, with its People Mover, does not. Disney World has a monorail; Miami, with its Metromover (which, as anyone can see, is just an automated, elevated bus system), clearly does not.

I have my own criteria for a monorail. It has a single rail, of course. But it must also run swiftly on quiet rubber wheels right into the lobby of a hotel or an office building. There should be a soft swooshing sound as it slows; bonus points are awarded for a slight but discernible change in air pressure when it arrives. The opening of the doors should be accompanied by a soft bonging, followed by a lush female voice, at once intimate and aloof, urging one to step smartly inside.

The Las Vegas Monorail gets mixed marks on these counts. Its cars, based on the five-eighths-scale Alweg cars originally commissioned by Disney, are pleasingly futuristic—not fully *Jetsons*, but not far from *A Clockwork Orange*. Most of them are wrapped in advertising, like the buses that double as billboards. A beguiling female voice beckoned me inside, but after the doors closed, the spell was broken by piped-in ads for casinos, including one in which Barry Manilow personally implored me to disembark at the Hilton.

Perhaps the most disappointing thing about the Las Vegas Monorail is the route. The trains don't glide into hotel lobbies or even past football-field-size neon signs. The platforms are behind the casinos on the east side of the Strip, and getting to them from the west side requires a wearying hike across traffic and through bewildering, unmarked thickets of clanging slot machines. Once you're on board, the view out the window is sadly quotidian. The four-mile track winds behind the hotels, affording views mostly of parking lots, croupiers taking cigarette breaks, and vast, sand-colored roofs dotted with HVAC domes that shimmer in the desert heat like distant Bedouin encampments.

And the ride is bumpy and not very fast, owing to track curves and frequent

station stops. "I have to admit, it's a little rough," said Pedersen, who recently spent five days in Las Vegas shooting video to promote monorails in other cities. "Especially having ridden so many Japanese monorails, which are as smooth as glass."

Monorails have more history than you might think. A patent for the first prototype was registered in 1821, and the first one-track passenger train appeared in 1825, drawn by a single horse. The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, in 1876, featured a Victorian-looking double-decker steam monorail, and in 1911 the first of the modern monorail cars—those that resemble huge suppositories—made

those monorail builders are just itching to show what they can do."

So what happened?

"Well, that's the mystery," Pedersen told me. "It runs the gamut from conspiracy theories involving oil and automobile companies to the fact that they just haven't been looked at seriously because they've been at theme parks and world's fairs."

I blame the future. The monorail shows that an idealized tomorrow can be every bit as encumbering as an imperfect yesterday. The monorail was twenty years ahead of its time, and it has been mired there ever since. It is to mass transportation what the theremin is to the symphony—a novelty that most



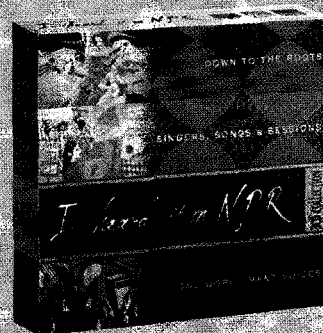
an appearance in Seattle, running on a wooden track.

But not until the middle of the past century did America reach the brink of its golden Monorail Age. In 1961 Disney nearly tripled the length of its 1959 Tomorrowland monorail, to two and a half miles, and made it as much a form of transportation as an amusement ride. A year later Seattle opened its mile-long monorail linking downtown to the World's Fair grounds and the Space Needle. A 1964 *Saturday Evening Post* article painted a glorious picture of tomorrow: "After reaching their train via escalator, the passengers recline in molded fiber-glass seats and gaze out large picture windows as electric power shoots them from station to station at 90 miles per hour." And tomorrow was nearly here. "The climate is right for a breakthrough in urban transportation," *Popular Mechanics* reported at about the same time, "and

people feel is best experienced once.

This vexes Pedersen, who remains convinced that monorails make good practical sense—despite the fact that the Las Vegas Monorail has been plagued by problems since its opening, including metal pieces that fell into the street, trains that stopped for no apparent reason, and one that left the station with its door open. Pedersen has also videotaped monorails in Malaysia and Japan, and he notes that one-track elevated systems can be installed relatively quickly and without claiming a large right-of-way in crowded urban cores. He sees the burgeoning urban interest in trolleys and other light rail, which often blocks car lanes and contributes to ground-level congestion, as "insane." And he wishes that people (I sense that by "people" he means writers like me) would stop imprisoning monorails in the future and let them come rolling into the present.

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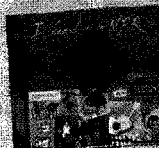
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Our program, one of the oldest and most prestigious in the nation, is small (no more than a dozen students admitted in any genre, with all workshops limited to twelve members); very intensive (the Master's degree is ordinarily awarded after the academic year of eight courses); and highly competitive (normally twenty-five students apply for each spot in fiction and poetry). We are best known for the quality of our graduate workshops. All of these are held in the same small room, which allows through its dusty windows a glimpse of the Charles River. Perhaps the most remarkable such workshop occurred when Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and George Starbuck gathered for instruction by Robert Lowell—gathered, by the way, less often in that little room than at the Ritz Bar. These days, the poetry workshops are run by our regular faculty of Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, who also conducts the playwriting workshops; and those in fiction are led by Leslie Epstein, Ha Jin, and distinguished visiting writers. Of course, our students have about them the resources of a great university. That means they often take courses with a superb faculty in literature that includes, besides the poets Geoffrey Hill and Rosanna Warren, the scholar Christopher Ricks and Boston University's other Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel. It is difficult to know how best to measure a student's success, or the worth of a program to a writer; we can say that our graduates in each genre have accomplished a good deal. Among numerous awards, our playwrights can list The Heideman Award, The Charles MacArthur Award for "Best New Play," and six national playwriting awards from the American College Theater Festival. Quite recently, our graduates in poetry have won the \$30,000 Whiting Award, the Barnard New Women Poets Series, a grant from the NEA, and the Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America; there have been three winners in three years of the Discovery/The Nation Award, and two winners of the National Poetry Series. In fiction, our students have also won the Whiting Award, along with an inordinate share of the nationwide Henfield Awards. A few years ago, our writers swept every major literary award in the country, with Ha Jin winning the National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner, and Jhumpa Lahiri the PEN/Hemingway and the Pulitzer Prize. Not a year goes by without a graduate of our program bringing out a book with a major publisher; and some, like Sue Miller and Arthur Golden, spend a good deal of time on best-seller lists. Over the last decade we have placed more than a score of our graduates in tenure-track positions at major American universities. We make, of course, no such assurances. Our only promise to those who join us is of a fair amount of time in that river-view room, time shared with other writers in a common, most difficult pursuit: the perfection of one's craft. For more information about the program, visiting writers, and financial aid (our teaching fellows conduct undergraduate creative writing classes), write to Director, Creative Writing Program, Boston University, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215 or visit our website at www.bu.edu/writing/. **Application deadline is March 1, 2006.**

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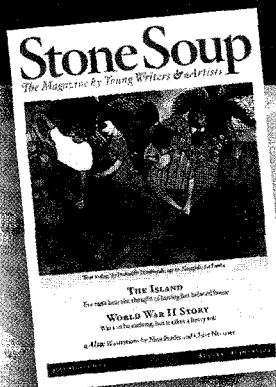
In this Pedersen has a natural ally in Curtis Myles, the president and chief executive officer of the Las Vegas Monorail Company. I stopped by to visit Myles at the monorail's office, a few blocks east of the Strip, and found that he, like Pedersen, was quite optimistic, perhaps largely because he'd been on the job only two months. A former executive with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, Myles sees the monorail as the last best hope for unknitting the Gordian traffic that plagues the Strip. Several times during our meeting he bounded up to a wall-mounted satellite photo of the resort corridor to show the several new routes he hopes to build, glossing over the fact that ridership so far had fallen short of projections. The train will go from the existing terminus to the airport, he said, and then along the west side of the Strip, through the MCM Mirage's new \$5 billion Project CityCenter, and onward. "It has the potential to really address what is probably going to be the biggest problem this valley faces, which is getting people from the airport to the resort hotels," he told me. "I don't think people really appreciate how bad that problem is going to be."

This all sounded important, and I tried to focus on what he was saying. It was difficult. The second-floor conference room in which we sat was just yards from the elevated track, and every few minutes a monorail would streak past cinematically, filling the window with the canary-yellow cars of the Nextel train, or the Martian-green cars of Star Trek: The Experience's Borg Invasion 4D. (RESISTANCE IS FUTILE, they read. YOU WILL BE ASSIMILATED.) It brought to mind Alvy Singer's home under the Coney Island roller coaster in *Annie Hall*. Each time, I looked away from Myles and stared at the trains. He noticed. "I get a review of my job performance every six minutes," he said.

It was more than that. Sitting in the quiet office with the monorail whispering past, I was wholly transported to another time. Here was the future—just as I remembered it. ▀

Wayne Curtis is the author of And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in 10 Cocktails, to be published next year.

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MOVIES

Can Jesus Save Hollywood?

From The Passion of the Christ to The Chronicles of Narnia, the Christian audience is making spirits rise

BY HANNA ROSIN

Daniel Roemer, a twenty-five-year-old aspiring director, has gathered about a dozen actors and friends to read from his latest movie script, which is going to be called either *American Dreamer* or *10,000 Virgins*. They sit in a semicircle on the homey velvet couches of Act One, a Los Angeles program for aspiring Christian screenwriters. In these first-floor offices at the foot of the Hollywood Hills, Bibles are as visible as the hundreds of videos lying around in stacks and on bookshelves, many of which conservative Christians would never let their children watch (*American Beauty*, *Being John Malkovich*, *The Sopranos*, *Will & Grace*). Mel Gibson's Jesus gazes down from a movie poster on the wall.

Roemer's script is about a young man who thinks he might be a prophet. A couple of times he thinks he is divining the will of God ("Saytha ... merry ... sahar ... uh ..."), but it might just as well be snippets from some infomercial: "Holy mascara? Sonny and Cher-a? Aloe vera? It was something like that."

Roemer is slumped in a corner on a little stool eating leftover rice with his fingers, and he laughs when he hears this part read. Boyish, with floppy blond hair, he looks indistinguishable from any other Hollywood writer in his slouchy jeans and ironic vintage T-shirt (LAWN ROCKET. FROM GO TO MOW IN SIX SECONDS!). This summer he was one of thirty-four students who attended the four-week screenwriting

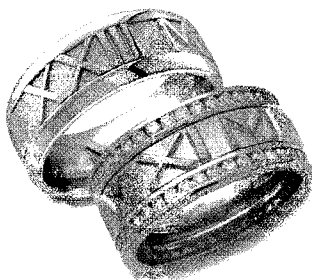
program at Act One. When he applied, Roemer was asked to describe his belief in Jesus Christ. "I believe in Jesus not because I was told to but because I've found nothing more authentic, even in the middle of an ocean of questions," he wrote in reply. Or, as he later characterized his answer, "Anyone who thinks he has it figured out is B.S."

Roemer is one of the fresh new voices that Act One faculty members talk about when Hollywood studio executives call. Lately they've been calling a lot. "We need a Christian movie," they tell Barbara Nicolosi, the former nun who founded Act One. "Send us your top five scripts." Some might consider this condescending, but Nicolosi figures that at least Hollywood is starting to make room for people like her. The reasons are partly spiritual, partly economic. The movie industry remains affected by post-9/11 national anxiety, and now studio heads want to make movies that "mean something." At the same time, it's well aware of what's known around town as "Passion dollars"—the previously untapped

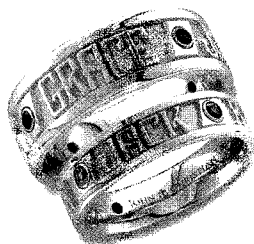
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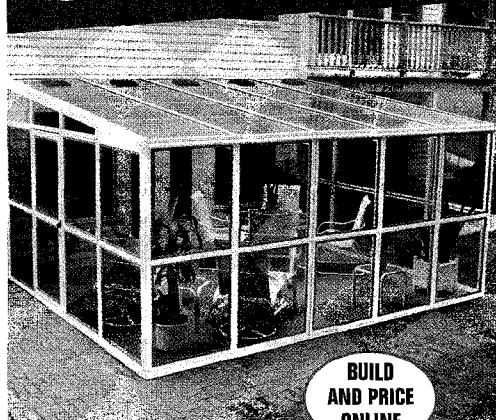
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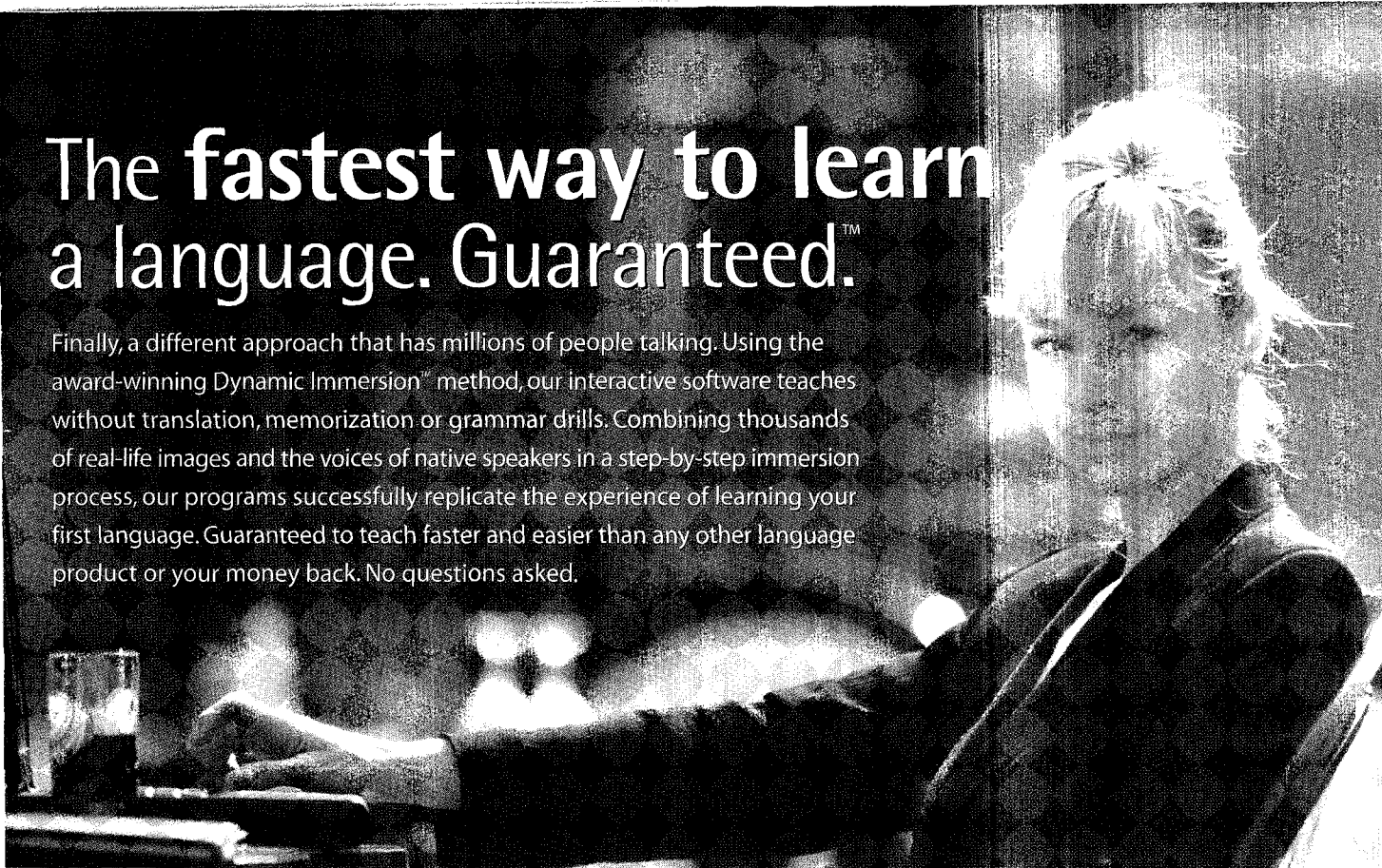
religious audience that made Mel Gibson's independently distributed movie *The Passion of the Christ* last year's biggest surprise. Recently the entertainment TV show *Inside Edition* invited Nicolosi to be a guest. "When I first came [to Hollywood], I never thought I'd be on *Inside Edition*," she confessed to the host before the show. "Didn't you know?" he replied. "Christian' is the new 'gay.'"

Gibson's movie was a catalytic event in Hollywood. Just after *The Passion of the Christ* opened, last year, major studios greenlighted additional religiously themed projects, including *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Disney's adaptation of the C. S. Lewis classic, which opens on December 9 and is being hyped as one of this season's blockbusters. Insiders jokingly refer to the movie as the "\$150 million tithe"—Hollywood's biggest gift to Christians since Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*. Because of their religious undertones, the Narnia books are considered to be required reading in the modern evangelical household, and many Christians regard Lewis as the greatest writer of the past century. Disney and its collaborator Walden Media are intent on reaching this audience. They hired Motive Marketing, the company that promoted *Passion*, to do outreach to churches, and held a publicity event for thirty faith-based groups in an attempt to create buzz for the film. The director, Andrew Adamson, checked religious symbolism with Douglas Gresham, C. S. Lewis's stepson, to ensure that *The Chronicles of Narnia* didn't portray anything "theologically incorrect."

Expectations among evangelicals run so high that the studio has had to explain, with great delicacy, why the movie is not, in fact, presented as explicit Christian allegory. "To me, the books didn't overwhelm with any religious or spiritual references," Adamson says, though he acknowledges that such references are there if you look for them. The Christian press closely tracked Adamson's search for the actor

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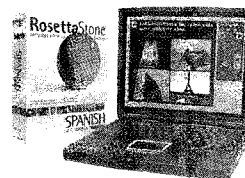
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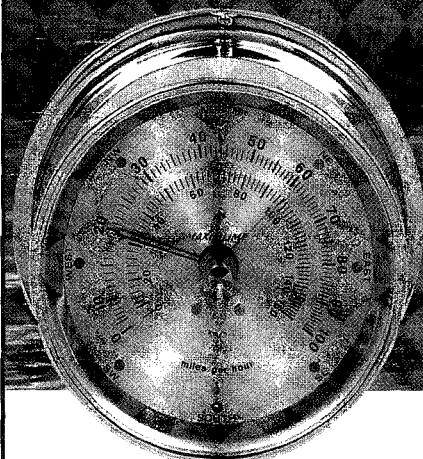
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who would supply the voice of Aslan, the lion. In the novels his life parallels the Resurrection story, and Christians wanted Adamson to hew to the character's Christlike aspects. Ultimately, Adamson explains, he opted not to make Aslan "too omnipotent," because "then he would be inaccessible." He says, "Those who want to look deeper can find more in the story. Those who don't want to look deeper can just enjoy it."

So far Hollywood's gamble on the Christian audience is paying off. *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (a sort of *The Exorcist* for religion majors that pits faith against rationalism and takes the side of the Catholic priest) was the country's top-grossing movie when I visited in September, earning \$30 million in its opening weekend. Its director, Scott Derrickson, is a graduate of the evangelical university in Los Angeles, Biola, and guest teaches at Act One. The following week *Emily Rose* lost the top spot to *Just Like Heaven*, a movie that plays the priest-exorcist for cheap laughs but is generally sympathetic to the idea of a spirit world. All over Hollywood, in fact, spirits and angels were rising up on billboards touting the new fall TV season: *Ghost Whisperer*, *Medium*, *Three Wishes*. And while you can't quite call it Christianity, it's a clear sign that Hollywood is enthralled with the realm beyond.

When Nicolosi started Act One, in 1999, CNN called her up for an interview. She couldn't get any member of her faculty to speak on the air. "They all thought it would cost them their other jobs," she says. Nicolosi refers to the Christians who had been working in Hollywood for some time as the first wave on the beach. They included Ron Austin, a writer for the television shows *Charlie's Angels* and *Mission Impossible*, and Jack Shea, the former president of the Directors Guild of America. Back then people used to joke with Nicolosi that it was a sin in Hollywood to admit you went to church. At the time, Christians were portrayed on TV and in movies primarily as irritating neighborhood goofballs (Ned Flanders on *The Simpsons*), slick pho-

nies (the priest on *The Sopranos*), even murderers (*Cape Fear*).

Then, after 9/11, the industry started to change. Studio heads began asking for movies that were "spiritual" even if not explicitly religious. Around this time the Act One faculty started coming out of the closet, as Nicolosi puts it. Ralph Winter, the producer of *X-Men* and *Fantastic Four*, and Tom Shadyac, the producer of *Bruce Almighty* and *Patch Adams*, began speaking at the handful of new Christian film festivals. Writers on popular TV shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed* began to feel comfortable casually mentioning to colleagues that they were going to church. They were the second wave.

Daniel Roemer's generation makes up the third. "They have no interest in this conversation" about how one reconciles one's Christianity with Hollywood, Nicolosi told me. "They think it's like asking why a Latino or a gay person should be in Hollywood." You can see the shape of this emerging generation of Christians in the hundreds of applicants to Act One: a pastor's wife and former teen country singer who wants to write "culture shaping, commercially successful TV shows and films"; an evangelical marooned at Harvard; a woman who used to work in the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives. This generation grew up worshipping God and Quentin Tarantino (the latter sometimes secretly). They are the cinematic wing of what the sociologist Alan Wolfe calls the "opening of the evangelical mind," a cultural renaissance among conservative Christians. Though their parents may have taught them to take refuge in a parallel Christian subculture, the movies these people found in Christian bookstores bored and embarrassed them. To be accepted at Act One you have to believe that Jesus is a real presence in your life. But the worst insult you can deliver there is to say that a movie reminds you of such notoriously low-budget Christian schlock as the Left Behind series and *The Omega Code*, or that the dialogue sounds like "Christianese."

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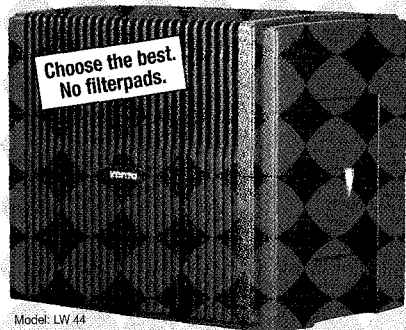
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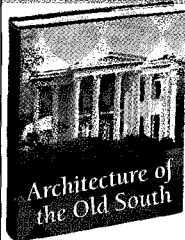
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are ahead of the broader evangelical culture. But already Christian institutions are popping up to support them. Biola once forbade its students from watching films of any kind; now it has a film department, as does Azusa Pacific University, an evangelical school just outside Pasadena. In 2002 Pat Robertson's Regent University opened a performing-arts center with film and animation studios, two screening theaters, and a back lot. Two years later George Barna, a respected evangelical pollster and researcher, had a revelation: he decided that film had more influence on parishioners than church, and he started Barna Films, an arm of his Christian media company. Philip Anschutz, a devout Christian and the billionaire founder of Qwest Communications, founded the Anschutz Film Group last year; it includes Walden Media, Disney's partner in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. (Anschutz produced last year's Oscar-winning *Ray*, in which he insisted on excising Ray Charles's cursing and womanizing.) Christians can now choose from among a dozen Hollywood prayer groups, including the Hollywood Prayer Network, dedicated to building "an army of talented professionals to change Hollywood from the inside out."

Despite the recent thaw in relations between Hollywood and Christians, the spiritual struggle of most evangelicals in the industry continues. Nicolosi receives letters from Christians horrified that her faculty includes writers for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *That '70s Show*, and that she uses *American Beauty*, a movie about a father who lusts after his daughter's friend, as a teaching tool. Scott Derrickson, who also directed the horror film *Hellraiser V*, draws criticism from Christian Web sites for dwelling in the darkness. He defends horror movies as the genre that "deals most directly with good and evil," saying that it "not only allows but also often demands a religious or spiritual point of view."

Derrickson has also drawn criticism from the left. After the release of *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* he was frustrated that what he considers a nonpo-

litical movie was nonetheless dragged into the culture wars by various reviewers. One called it "Karl Rove" cinema. "That was crushing to me," says Derrickson, who describes himself as anti-Bush and anti-right wing.

Many younger screenwriters prefer comic-book movies for much the same reason that Derrickson is drawn to horror. "They're full of heroes and villains," says Leo Partible, a contributor to the book *The Gospel According to Superheroes*.

On a recent Tuesday night a group of about twenty Act One students gathered for a lesson on pitching ideas to studios. The aspiring filmmakers submitted their ideas anonymously, on little slips of paper that filled a huge glass bowl. Amy Snow, a graduate of Pepperdine University who won the prestigious Disney Screenwriting Fellowship, and Lee Batchler, who wrote *Batman Forever*, selected pitches to read aloud; for each pitch students held up a green card for "yes," a yellow one for "not sure," or a red one for "no." The ideas started to fly—for reality shows based on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*; episodes of *Gilmore Girls*, *Scrubs*, *Arrested Development*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*; movies that were spy thrillers, fantasies, romantic comedies. Ideas featuring Christian characters were occasionally mentioned but received no more attention than any others. Someone wanted to do a show with a born-again plot line. "I don't know about this evangelical-Christian thing," someone said skeptically. "Is it supposed to be an indie film or something?"

Afterward I mentioned to Chris Riley, Act One's director of writing programs, that the pitch session sounded like those at any other film school: people liked the edgy, original ideas and rejected the tired ones. If I hadn't known this was a Christian screenwriting program, I told him, I never would have guessed. I meant it as a compliment, but he didn't entirely take it as one. "That's something we really think about here," he said.

Nicolosi gets the most heat for having on her staff Dean Batali, one of the lead writers for *That '70s Show*, a long-running sitcom that's literally

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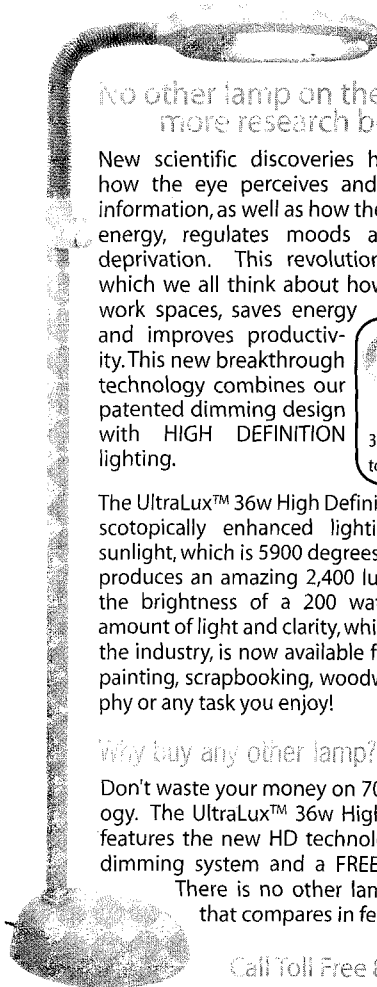
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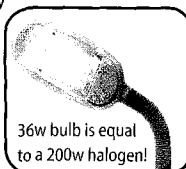
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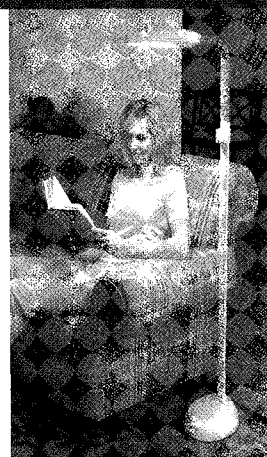


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about sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. Batali doesn't need anyone to tell him he's living in Satan's vineyard. He is a prime example of the kinds of compromises a Christian has to make when he becomes successful in Hollywood. "I can make an argument that this show is degrading the culture," he told me, and he mentioned that the Parents Television Council, a watchdog group many Christian parents trust, routinely gives his show a red light, signifying that it "may include gratuitous sex, explicit dialogue, violent content, or obscene language, and is unsuitable for children." But, he says with resignation, "this is where God put me."

Batali, forty-one, could pass for a midwestern pastor. He's friendly and clean-cut, and tucks his shirt into his jeans. His office is decorated with drawings by his two kids and with considerable Winnie the Pooh memorabilia. On his desk is the first line of a script that's about to be filmed: "Fez

though nearly half of American teens belong to one. But he's also frustrated with his fellow churchgoers. "It's just crap," he complains. "We claim to serve such a wonderful God whose people can't write a scene or paint a painting." What Tony Kushner did for gays and Eve Ensler did for feminists some Christian writer ought to do for his own group, he says. "Where's the Christian *Vagina Monologues*?" He's aware of how ridiculous that sounds, but means it nonetheless. Batali's plan is to build enough of a reputation that he can eventually pitch his own drama pilot with plenty of funny, three-dimensional Christian characters.

After the script reading at Act One the actors headed off home or to their late-night bartending jobs. Roemer, his co-writer Ron Fernandez, and his producer, Craig Detweiler, were left behind. Detweiler runs Biola's film department and is giddy

What Tony Kushner did for gays and Eve Ensler did for feminists some Christian ought to do for his own group, says one devout Hollywood writer. "Where's the Christian *Vagina Monologues*?"

wakes up in bed with a 45-year-old woman." On the other side of his desk is his Bible, which he reads every day at work—a habit his fellow writers definitely think is weird. Down the hall from his office is a door marked HOT GIRLS CLUB, a reference to a juvenile running joke on the show.

"I sit in a room full of profanity and blasphemy all day long," Batali explained. When he pitches his own episodes, he tries to steer away from sex. If he's given a sex scene to write, he doesn't "get into the mechanics" the way another writer would. Instead he uses wordplay. "Does that change the culture and bring more people to the God of Abraham? No. But it's a tiny grain of salt." One time, he told me, four characters had a "fascinating" discussion about God. But they were high on marijuana.

Batali is frustrated with Hollywood types, because most of them have never heard of a church youth group, even

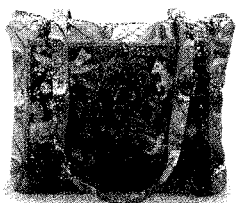
about Roemer's script. He says it represents the best of this new generation of Christian filmmakers, the generation he's trying to mold—it's *Napoleon Dynamite* with soul, a *Donnie Darko* that found the light. The problem is always the same, though: where to get the money.

In the future imagined by Batali and Nicolosi this won't be a problem. Every Hollywood studio will have an Anschutz in the making, a Christian executive looking to help one of his own. Every channel will have its Christian version of *Will & Grace*, some sitcom set in a megachurch or a Catholic high school. Christians will be like Jews, like African-Americans, like gay people in Hollywood: just another minority looking back and laughing at the time when they couldn't even get a job in the mailroom. ■

Hanna Rosin is a Washington Post staff writer who is currently working on a book about the new evangelical elite.

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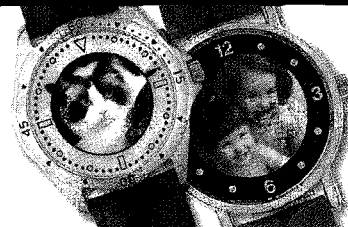
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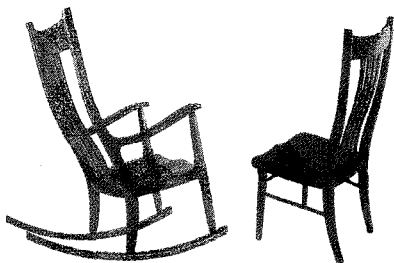
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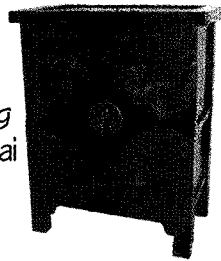
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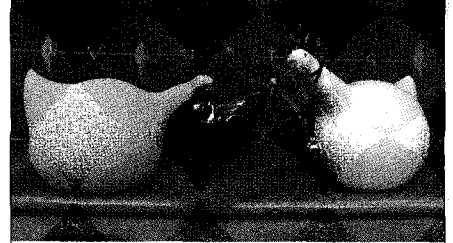
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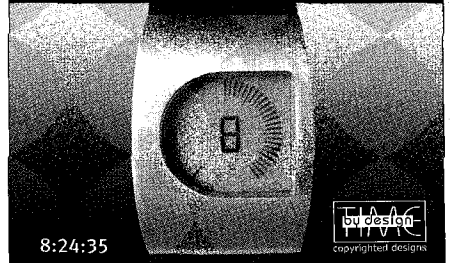


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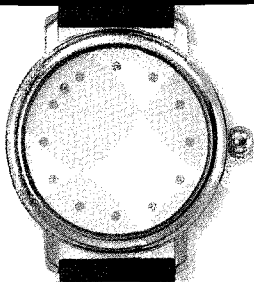


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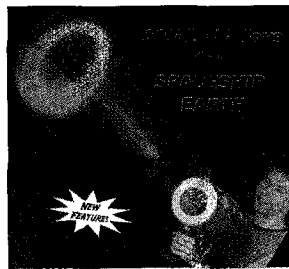
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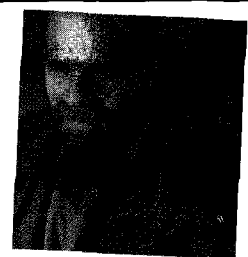


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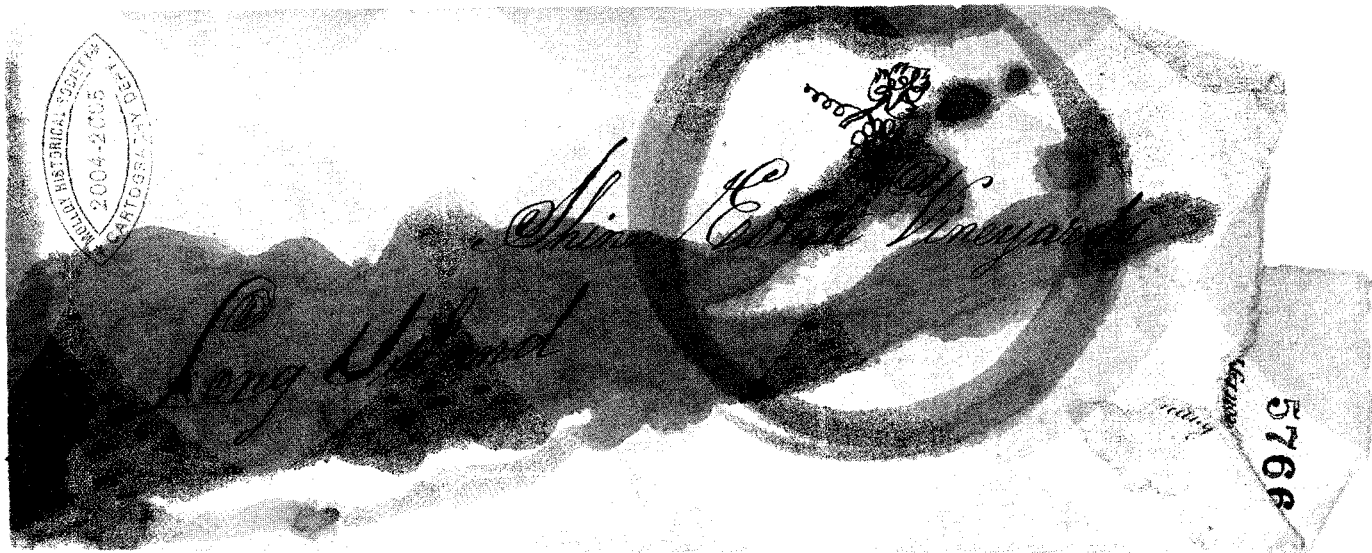
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FOOD

Merlot for Snobs

A Long Island winery is challenging Merlot's deservedly dismal reputation

BY CORBY KUMMER

At twilight on the North Fork of Long Island I tasted firsthand the cliché that the vineyard makes the wine. I was walking through deep-green fields of vines just days before this fall's harvest, and couldn't keep my fingers out of the nets newly tied against starlings. The grapes I was serially stealing from Shinn Estate Vineyards were lesser-known varieties associated with Bordeaux (Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Semillon, Malbec), planted because the North Fork has similar growing conditions: sandy, loamy soil in a maritime climate. The Malbec was particularly sweet and fruity. Earlier I had tasted freshly squeezed Sauvignon Blanc juice, which seemed perfectly balanced on its own—sweet yet acidic, concentrated and intense. Having consumed a generous glass of Shinn Estate's very fresh-tasting 2004 Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon at lunch, a wine that went perfectly with exceptional fresh goat cheese made just down the road (see box), I could imagine how good the vineyard's Sauvignon Blanc will taste next spring.

Wine grapes often taste good, but seldom *that* good. Usually they're interesting: perhaps oddly acidic, perhaps slightly funky, even when

they will be the base for a wine that is smooth, balanced, and fascinating. Balance and fascination generally come from blending—the skill French winemakers perfected to compensate for climates that can't be counted on to produce grapes at the same level of ripeness year after year. I had always assumed that the French habit of grouping wines by the name of an area—Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne—and naming individual wines for a vineyard or a certain hillside was regional and proprietary pride gone wild.

How short-sighted of me to accuse the French of chauvinism! Like the cool-climate growers of France, Long Island winemakers are at the mercy of the elements and of their own skill at cultivating grapes and blending wines made from them. The place they make their wine, and the way they grow their grapes, really do make all the difference.

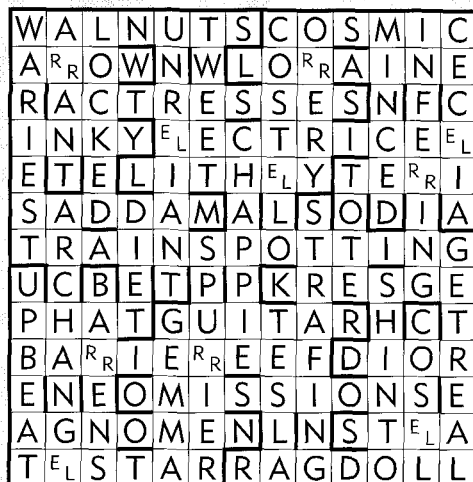
Falsely modest vineyard owners often trot out the cliché to signal the special superiority of their land. But those who are particularly proud of the state of their soil use it as well. Over lunch at Shinn Estate Vineyards, Barbara Shinn and David Page, the owners, described the compost tea

and liquefied fish they apply by hand and the soil's perfect pH level, with an ideal balance of fungus to bacteria (mushrooms in soil, which make it basic, are good for grapes; bacteria, which make it acidic, are better for vegetables). They allow grasses and clover—fifty-five native plants, they say—to cover the ground beneath the vines ("We're the only no-till vineyard on the East Coast," Shinn says), where other vineyard owners use Roundup to clear away weeds. They cut off leaves that will shade lower clusters of grapes on their perfect-looking vines, but let enough remain to shade the upper ones. They pluck off, one by one, grapes that have stayed green, so that not even a hint of unripeness will mar their wine. They do every bit of pruning themselves, they said, passing each day through their fifteen acres of grapes. By the end of our long walk through flat fields where corn and rye used to grow, Long Island Sound in the distance and McMansions across the road, I was convinced that the couple recognized every cluster if not every grape.

This happened to be an excellent year for ripening grapes—so sunny and dry that a downpour that late-September afternoon, Shinn and Page told me after measuring the rainfall, represented a full third of the rain they had received all summer. But Long Island is usually cool, and summers can be wet; in such years grapes are less sweet and many more clusters must be sacrificed to enable the fullest possible ripening of the remainder. It is then

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that blending becomes essential, and that the varieties of grape that grow well in this climate—some full and heavy, like Cabernet Sauvignon; some light and acidic, like Malbec—come in handy to balance out the wine.

Little of this is true in California, of course, where the hot climate of the Napa and Sonoma Valleys produces perfectly ripened grapes that taste the same year after year. Thus California has been able to blast the European competition with powerful wines made from big, thick-flavored grapes suited to warmer climates, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Australia, South Africa, and other countries with hot, dry climates and cool evenings have followed California's lead, and the expanding international wine market has left France looking like a hidebound, overpriced relic.

My new respect for France, whose wines inspired Shinn and Page at the start of their winemaking adventures, grew from my surprise at tasting a remarkably distinguished Shinn Estate wine made from a grape that in Californian hands has acquired a deservedly dismal reputation among wine snobs, most famously the one played by Paul Giamatti in *Sideways*: Merlot. In California, Merlot ripens fast, with high sugar content (resulting in high alcohol levels) but less flavor development than in warmer-climate grapes. Shinn Estate Merlots are soft and inviting—as are California Merlots (and *nothing more*, the Giamatti character might add)—but also structured and complex, like great wines. Like, in fact, Pomerol or Saint-Emilion—legendary French Bordeaux made principally from the recently reviled Merlot.

Shinn and Page are leaders of a second generation of Long Island winemakers. When the first winemakers began planting on the North Fork (the pioneers were Alex and Louisa Hargrave, in the mid-1970s), only the South Fork, home of the Hamptons, was fashionable, and the cash crop on both forks was potatoes. Now there are thirty-four wineries along a finger of land roughly five by twenty miles, with Long Island Sound or Peconic Bay never more than

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three miles away, and as many acres are planted in grapes as in potatoes (about 3,000 acres of each). Predictably, the people who can now afford to start wineries are not academic couples with dreams of France, like the Hargraves, but millionaires like Mike Lynne, the co-CEO of New Line Cinema, and the Entenmann family.

When Shinn and Page, who owned and ran a tiny and adored Greenwich Village restaurant, bought a farm, seven years ago, the land was just affordable. Page, who has the profile of a Founding Father and a gray ponytail to go with it, is from Wisconsin; Shinn, the kind of long-limbed, casual American beauty the designer Claire McCardell had in mind when she made American sportswear internationally popular, grew up in Ohio. The couple met in the Bay Area, where they worked in restaurants and took busman's holidays to spend time in vineyards in the Napa Valley. When they opened Home Restaurant, in 1993, they wanted to bring the California approach to Manhattan, but not "California cuisine"—that is, they wanted to use as much local produce and wine as possible. Produce wasn't much of a problem, and became less so as other New York restaurants began looking to duplicate the Bay Area farm-to-kitchen-door experience.

But wine was. A chance trip to visit an artist friend on the North Fork led to their falling in love with the area, and the success of their restaurant allowed them to buy a house on the water (then conceivable for arty but practical types) and, later, the farm. This summer, five years after they first planted grapes and three years after they released their first wine, the couple sold their beach house for a vast profit. All of it will go into a winery—they have been making their wine elsewhere—and a four-room bed-and-breakfast they will create next year in the former farmhouse. Page insists that running a winery at a profit is possible; he points to his own start and to the fact that he and Shinn do almost all the work other than harvest. They have no salesmen, no business manager, no greeter or even cleaner at the tasting room they open on weekends.



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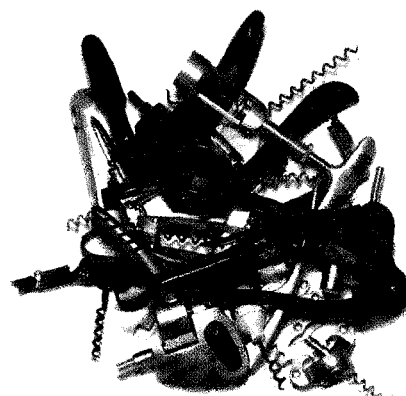
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FIVE NORTHEASTERN GOAT CHEESES

Catapano Dairy, Mattituck, NY (631-298-0043; www.catapanodairyfarm.com). Fresh, spreadable chèvre, salty and with a slight tang, available only on the premises at Long Island's sole goat farm.

Coach Farm Dairy, Pine Plains, NY (518-398-5325; www.coachfarm.com). The largest goat-cheese producer in the Northeast, and a national leader. Light, subtle fresh logs and many variations, including lemon and lowfat.

Hillman Farm, Colrain, MA (413-624-3646; www.shopwma.com/hillmanfarm). One of several New England farms specializing in aged rather than fresh goat cheeses. Its Harvest wheel is a fine introduction for anyone already sold on, say, aged manchego, the Spanish sheep's-milk cheese.

Twig Farm, West Cornwall, VT (802-462-3363; www.twigfarm.com). Another good introduction for goat skeptics: tomme, a mild-flavored, semi-hard cheese usually made with cow's milk but here made with all goat's milk (Twig Farm also makes a mixed-milk tomme).

Westfield Farm, Hubbardston, MA (978-928-5110; www.chevre.com). Expertly made fresh Capri on a French model, delicately flavored but a bit denser and more crumbly than other fresh logs.

Styles in wine have changed greatly since the first wine was bottled on the North Fork—to Shinn and Page's advantage. When the first generation was getting started, the revolution was in California, and Robert Parker gave his highest ratings to powerful, high-alcohol wines. But lately an appreciation of cooler-climate wines, which are higher in acidity and lower in alcohol, is growing. These wines go better with food, and Shinn and Page, chefs at heart, wanted to make food-friendly wines. In their first years on Long Island they played at making blends in friends' cellars, using beakers as if they were measuring cups, taking 80 percent of this and 10 percent of that from other winemakers' barrels, and bottling the blends they liked under the Home label, to be sold at the

restaurant. This cook's apprenticeship informed the way they built their own vineyard and their own wines.

Shinn and Page make winemaking sound both simple and appealing. "It's like cooking," they told me. "Taste through every barrel, over and over again. It's like anything you taste—if it tastes good, you know it's right." At the new bed-and-breakfast Page will cook late breakfasts (he has grilled quail in mind, he told me) and the couple will offer "wine camp," in which guests will help them prune and then try to make blends of their own.

I intend to enroll, and I already know my benchmark: Shinn Estate's reserve Merlot from 2002, the first vintage the couple released. (The lower-priced Merlot long ago sold out; the reserve is available for about \$40 a bottle from shinnestatevineyards.com.) This is the distinguished wine that changed my opinion of Long Island and made me assume I was drinking a very good French wine. My reaction is just the one Shinn and Page want to eradicate. "I don't want to make a wine that tastes like France," Page told me. "I want to make a wine that tastes like Long Island."

SUBTLE CHÈVRE

Another North Fork treasure

Good fresh chèvre should be pure white and spreadable, without the chalky, dry, crumble-to-bits texture of many logs. You can seldom find it so pure, because fresh goat-cheese logs are so often flavored with things like jalapeño or cracked peppercorns. As with many mild foods people monkey with, if the flavor is subtle, varied, and good on its own, there's not much point to piling on extra ingredients.

Catapano chèvre, a fresh white cheese from the only goat farm on Long Island, is sold in small plastic-wrapped discs resembling cream cheese in looks and texture. It would be very good on a bagel. Mild as it is, the chèvre has a tang and a salty bite. As for the goatly flavor that puts many people off aged goat cheeses, it's barely detectable in fresh chèvre. The lactose-sensitive are increasingly turning to fresh goat's milk, which they can digest more easily (Catapano doesn't sell it, because fresh

milk requires a different license). For them, or for anyone who wants an interesting and satisfying cream-cheese alternative, Catapano chèvre is ideal.

You'll have to visit the farm to get it. Last July the American Cheese Society, the country's leading group of artisan-cheese producers, gave Catapano top honors in the category of fresh, unripened goat cheese, and demand for it only increased. "If the goats aren't milking, I don't have it," Karen Catapano said when I visited recently. Once, she told me, after she had sold out, a man kept her from leaving by standing in her driveway with his arms folded, insisting that she give up a square from her hidden reserve. She finally convinced him she didn't have one.

Catapano, a former nurse, and her husband, Michael, a doctor at a local walk-in clinic, bought their small goat farm in 2002 and turned to cheese-making partly as a form of occupational therapy when their son, Patrick, was sent to Iraq. Michael read veterinary textbooks, and Karen decided to learn to make goat's-milk soap after she tried a bar at a goat-cheese workshop and found that it made her skin feel softer and healthier—and after a large batch of her husband's yogurt failed to set. Their backgrounds equipped them for cheese-making, which requires extreme fastidiousness; goat's milk in particular easily picks up off flavors. "My husband likes doing the same thing over and over," Karen said. "He's a scientist. I'm a salad person."

Although their fresh chèvre sells out fast, the Catapanos make other cheeses, including feta and gouda. When I visited, they were living in a suburban ranch house, which had cabanalike wooden outbuildings that made a quaint but odd setting for cheese-making. (They have since moved the goats to a larger farm, where visitors can observe milking.) It seems in character for an area where people are still teaching themselves to make good food and wine on a homely scale. And the therapy worked. Patrick, whose picture was displayed in the tiny wooden shop along with accounts he sent from Iraq, came back last spring. ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

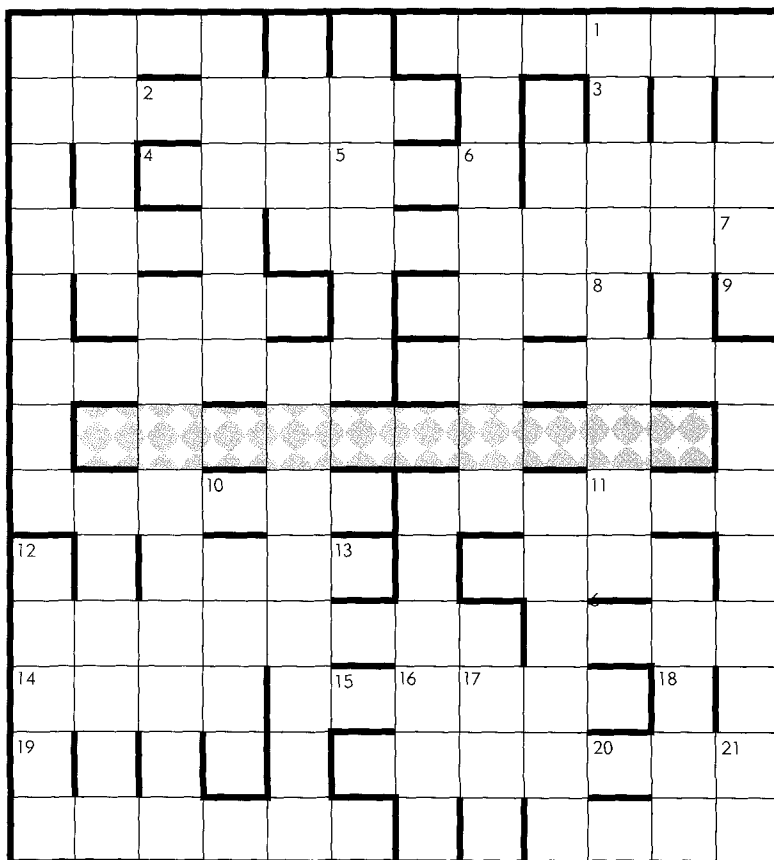
Cryptic Recipe

Scattered through this puzzle's grid are some unclued entries, which are ingredients for a certain recipe. Portions (i.e., letters) falling in the numbered squares should be copied to the correspondingly numbered blanks below the grid, where they will form the Recipe Clue. The answer to this clue, showing what the recipe yields, belongs in the shaded center of the grid. As an added check, the answer includes a numbered letter from each ingredient. Normal answers are clued in order, row by row for the Acrosses and column by column for the Downs. Six clue answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 172.

ACROSS

- Brownie put back in front of a small hopper (4)
- Fishes for first of the baked goods (6)
- Heads of state may order green pea soup (4)
- Blade initially cut slice of pie (4)
- Dessert vendor Lee going around a lush Florida city (8)
- Finished off large batch (4)
- Label missing the last cereal ingredient (4)
- Pass bananas, please (6)
- In return, gave back toddler's napkin? (6)
- Department head pursuing article like quinoa? (6)
- Bit of lobster in center is not very spicy (4)
- Stocks lie around back of kitchen quite a long time (8)
- Chew whitish piece of gum the wrong way (4)
- In Nairobi, epicurean award (4)
- Straying dieter got even again (6)
- Chuck Eliot has devoured bagels (4)



12 10 20 3

4 2 18 9 15 13

8 19 17 16 21

1 14 7 5 11 6

DOWN

- For the audience, turns loose ice over (6, 2)
- Boys consuming restricted fats (5)
- Wandering deli, be ready to nosh? (6)
- Robber left canister smashed (9)
- Dad carrying fish back out (6)
- Oddball inverted barrel, empty inside (4)
- Bee is circling orange in some sketches (4)
- One catching a bass for the *Voice*? (8)
- Raid protested out loud (6)
- Fare that is limitless for soul legend (6)

- Flower expert's Indian wrap gobbled by horse (8)
- Agitate jug (4)
- Mount bones (4)
- Process food set out behind scoop (6)
- Himalayan peak hotel's rum (6)
- Fugitives ate at first in airport areas (8)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

In July a reader sought “a term for a smell that you recognize but can’t place.” As was mentioned in the October issue, word fugitives for all kinds of things elicit plays on *déjà vu*. Sure enough, this time the most popular suggestion was *déjà pew* and variants thereof. (Several correspondents wanted to know whether to write it *pew* or *P.U.* or *pheuw* or some other way. Take your pick: there is no expert consensus on the word’s etymology or spelling. Indeed, if you have antiquarian leanings, feel free to spell it *pugh*, the way Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* of 1755 did.) However, the smell we wanted to describe wouldn’t necessarily elicit a cry of *pew*, since it isn’t necessarily unpleasant. The same objection applies to such other submissions as *indistinkt*, *stinkling*, and *stinkognito* (each sent in by more than one person); *oddoriferous*, from Edward Klein, of Aventura, Florida; and *odolorous*, from Mark Stitham, of Kailua, Hawaii.

The opposite objection applies to the brainchild of Joseph Clonick, of Chicago, who wrote, “It’s known that many of those tantalizing smells are eventually recognized to have their origins in early-childhood experiences. So I think it appropriate to group them together as *schnozztalgia*.” Ditto for what Michelle Gonzalez Valdez, of San Antonio, Texas, wrote: “Sometimes you just get a little *scentimental*.”

Furthermore, have you noticed that none of these words is a term for the smell itself? Some additional suggestions that share this flaw, although they otherwise have their merits, are *smellusive*, *amnesia*, *familiar*, and *on the tip of your nose*. Dan Corts, of Davenport, Iowa, warned, “Aromas often conjure up strong memories. Sometimes a smell can bring about false memories—memories of an event that never occurred. This is known as *olfiction*.” And Emily Baierl, of Lake Elmo, Minnesota, wrote,

“When you detect an odor that you recognize but can’t place, you could say it *rings a smell*.”

Remini-scent was a popular idea that actually fills the relevant lexical gap. A few readers came up with *abscent*. And Marc A. Werlinsky, of Broomall, Pennsylvania, and Anthony Nolan, of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, came up with *je ne scent quoi*. But maybe the neatest and most functional solution to the problem is *enigmaroma*. More than one person sent in this idea, but the one who sent it first, and who therefore takes top honors, is Tom Thomsen, of Magnolia, Texas.



Another reader, who shares a job, asked Word Fugitives to help her find a better way to refer to her co-worker than “the lady I job-share with.” Aaron Weinert, of Boston, began his response, unkindly, “I suppose if you are both slackers . . .,” and William F. Kittredge, of Ocean City, New Jersey, began his, “Unfortunately, from what I see going on today . . .” Both Weinert and Kittredge were on their way to explaining the same coinage: *co-shirker*. Peter Howland, of Bethel, Connecticut, took a more positive attitude and suggested *co-efficient*.

A number of people proposed *partner in time* and *paymate*. Andrew Friede, of Atlanta, came up with *colaborator*. Lucy Duhon, of Toledo, Ohio, suggested “*alter ergo* (from the Greek *ergon*, meaning ‘work’).”

An especially promising line of thought involved variants on *doppelgänger*, such as *doppelworker*, *doppelgigger*, and *doppeljobber*. But the variant that people (at least people who know what a doppelgänger is) would be most likely to understand if you said it is probably *jobbelgänger*. For being the first to submit this coinage, Lynn Reilly, of Seattle, takes top honors.

Now ANNA BALDWIN, of Arlee, Montana, writes, “I’d like a word for that time of half sleep when one thinks of the solution to a problem or some creative notion to implement the next day. The solution or idea is nearly always stellar, even in the light of day.”

And PEGGY BIDÉ, of Mbabane, Swaziland, writes, “I have been searching for a word to describe a situation that frequently occurs in our house. I recently informed our children that I would write to ask you for assistance. As a parent is frantically preparing supper, at least one and sometimes all the kids will continually ask when supper will be ready, because they say they are hungry. When supper is indeed ready and suppertime is called, no child appears and the person preparing the meal has to practically shout and beg the kids to get to the table.”

Send words that meet Anna Baldwin’s or Peggy Bidé’s needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by December 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent Mission to America: A Novel, by Walter Kirn; 1491, by Charles C. Mann; and my own Word Fugitives.

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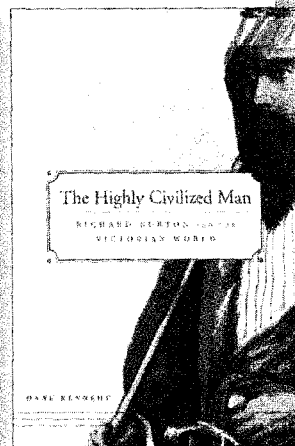
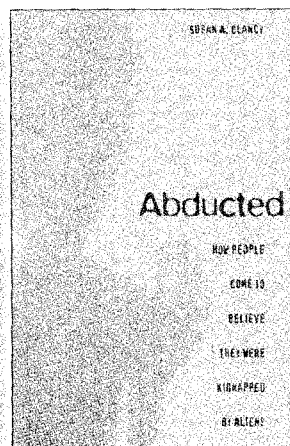
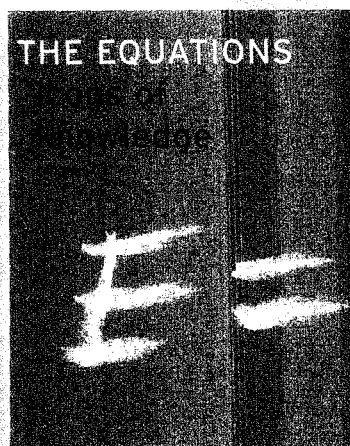
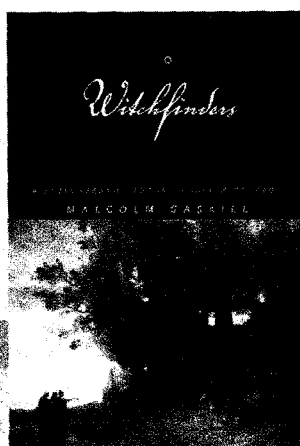
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The Least Worst Man

Sidney Luft (1915–2005)

BY MARK STEYN

Sid Luft was the nearest Judy Garland came to the man that didn't get away. By the end the nights were bitter, the star had lost her glitter, but he was hanging in there. The longest-lasting of her five husbands, he played Mister Judy Garland from 1952 to 1965—or half her adult life, if one can call it that. Unlike his predecessor, he was not “musical,” in either the artistic or the euphemistic sense; unlike his successor, he was not voraciously gay. A scrappy, gravelly little guy known as One-Punch Luft, he was an all but unique figure: a rare friend of Judy who wasn't a friend of Dorothy. And as a result, folks can't figure out what he saw in her. For a long time the received wisdom was that he was a sleazy opportunist who'd hitched himself to her coattails and then milked her as long as he could. Yet insofar as there was a second act to Garland's career, he was its impresario: *A Star Is Born*, the great Capitol albums, Carnegie Hall and the London Palladium, the TV specials and weekly variety show that got closer than anything to the real Judy—all these are from the Luft years.

In fact, he was making headlines long before he met his alleged meal ticket: “BOY, 12, WALKING ARSENAL” reported his hometown paper back in Westchester County. In those days it wasn't the easiest neighborhood for a Jew, which is why young Sid was packing heat at a tender age. At the local rink an older kid whacked him with a hockey stick and barked, “Hey, Jew, get off the ice!” So he took boxing lessons and lifted weights to the point where at age sixteen he could walk up the stairs on the palms of his hands.

That proved less useful in Hollywood, where even the tough guys condescended to him. Once, at a party at Ira Gershwin's, he began an observation with the words “Culturally speaking . . .” Humphrey Bogart cut in: “What right do you have to say ‘culturally speaking’?”

You weren't really exposed to much culture as a young man, were you?” Warming to this theme, Bogie said, “I lived on Park Avenue, my father was a doctor, my mother was an artist, so if I say ‘culturally speaking,’ people will take it to be the truth. But you, Sid?”

“That does it,” said Sid. “Let's take this outside!”

Bogart put on his glasses. “You wouldn't hit an old man, would you?”

If he never quite fit in in Hollywood, he spent a lifetime not quite fitting in anywhere else, either. Boxer, brawler, boozier, businessman, and good at all but the last of those, Luft had been in California since the thirties, save for service in the Royal Canadian Air Force, for which he volunteered after the outbreak of war—that is, well before Pearl Harbor. His timing was rarely that good: a perpetually failing entrepreneur, he got most of his good ideas too soon or too late, and the rest of the time he mooched along on the fringes of glamour. By the end of the forties he'd started and folded a custom car company and been a test pilot, a nondescript talent agent, the producer of a couple of B movies with the elderly child stars Jackie Cooper and Jackie Coogan, and the husband of a Hollywood starlet, Lynn Bari. After seven years the starlet divorced him on grounds of cruelty, because he had a habit of leaving the house at six to buy the evening paper and coming back with it in the wee small hours.

By that point, Judy Garland had gone to Oz and back, been Andy Hardy's sweetheart and Fred Astaire's dance partner, married a top bandleader (David Rose) and a top movie director (Vincente Minnelli). Luft wasn't a top anything. As one gossip columnist put it, “So Sid Luft is what a girl finds over the rainbow?” They were the perfect couple: her career had self-detonated and his never ignited.

As their daughter, Lorna Luft, tells it, they met at Billy Reed's Little Club in New York, where Judy was dining with a friend, Freddie Finklehoffe. Sid never forgot the moment. She was wearing a gold coat, a black dress, and a pillbox hat, and she had him at “Hello.” “When you met her, she'd say, ‘hello,’ and you'd fall down. The voice would kill you. In a sense, you would drop dead every time she talked to you.” Which is what her date would have preferred. “Get lost,” Finklehoffe told Luft. But Luft didn't, not for fifteen years.

“I love Judy,” he said when they married. “I want to protect her from the trauma she once knew. I don't want her to be bewildered or hurt again. I want her to have happiness.” And for a while she did. There were two Judy Garlands: The first was the moonfaced little girl who got swept up by that Kansas twister and did the show right here in the barn for as many years as MGM could strap her breasts down and do whatever else was needed to keep the child star a child. That Garland was gone long before 1950, when Metro finally fired her. The second Judy went straight from Andy Hardy's barn to premature middle age, and emerged as the most dynamic stage presence since Al Jolson: a ballad singer whose taste in songs was second only to Sinatra's, a great comedienne, and a rueful raconteuse. That was Luft's gift to the rest of us.

He got her back into movies, too, producing her comeback picture, *A Star Is Born*, the story of a rising young star and a fading self-destructive one, with an actress who'd been both all but simultaneously. At the end, with her husband, Norman Maine (James Mason), having taken his one-way walk into the sea, a teary Vicki Lester (Garland) takes the microphone and announces, “Hello, everybody . . . This is . . . Mrs. Norman Maine.” She got an Oscar nomination for the role, and if she'd won, she'd have been more than happy to start her acceptance speech with “This is Mrs. Sidney Luft.” But she was pregnant with her son, Joey, and on Oscar night she was in the maternity ward with a camera crew parked outside. They weren't needed; and

as Grace Kelly went up to accept her award for *The Country Girl*, Luft looked at the TV technicians dismantling their equipment and told his wife, "Baby, fuck the Academy Awards, you've got yours in the incubator."

The sweet talk didn't last. Every star is fleeced by hangers-on to one degree or another. If you're a celebrity prone to erratic behavior and no-shows and "health problems," it's worse, because at any one time you've got half a dozen contractual disputes and suits and countersuits or something going on. The Lufts had money problems from day one and always needed the next deal to pay off the mess hanging over from the last deal. For the first half of their marriage Sid was Judy's business manager, and thus got the blame. For the second half he handed it off to others and then found himself on the outside as everyone else bled her dry. The best at it was David Begelman, a peerless Hollywood embezzler who eventually blew his brains out.

Meanwhile, between bust-ups and reconciliations, Judy was finding consolation elsewhere. She'd go round to Sinatra's pad and hector Frank into having sex with her. He would plan a quiet night sitting in his orange mohair sweater reading Bennett Cerf, only to look down and find Judy trying to pull his pants off. One night her TV producer, Bill Colleran, was at her place watching the show when he noticed her hand on his crotch. "I can't," he protested quaintly. "I'm married." Judy flounced across the room and sighed, "Nobody wants to fuck the legend."

Sid Luft did. But as the "reconciliations" grew shorter and the gaps between longer, he became a Hollywood synonym for "loser." Bob Hope worked him into an Oscar act, as merely the latest variation on Hope's standard emcee's gag ("Welcome to the Academy Awards—or, as it's known at my house, Passover"). On Oscar night in 1962 Hope closed the show with "There'll

be a victory celebration at the International Ballroom at the Hilton Hotel. I'll be there at a special table with Sid Luft and Eddie Fisher."

Back in 1943, when he was a test pilot for Douglas, Luft took one of the first A-20s on a ferry flight to Daggett, California. On his final approach a fuel-line fitting broke. He got the plane down but, with the left engine on fire, had to crawl out through the flames. He got most of the way before realizing he was caught in the leg straps of his harness. Hanging out the cockpit upside down, he had to crawl back inside the burning



plane to free his feet from the straps. In the final years of his marriage to Garland he must have occasionally felt he was reliving that moment on an endless loop: he'd try to exit but would snag on something and have to crawl back in to get burned all over again.

In the end the security guards threw him out of the house. Judy took the kids to London and married a guy named Mark Herron. He recommended a young pianist named Peter Allen to Judy, and Judy in turn pressed Allen on her daughter Liza. Herron carried on a

sexual relationship with Allen during their respective marriages to Judy and Liza. One is all for being broad-minded and sophisticated about these things, and Peter Allen was certainly a fetching young Aussie hunk back in those days; but measured only by careless damage to others, Sid Luft can stake a plausible claim to being the least worst man in Judy Garland's life.

He remained in Hollywood, and though no ship ever quite came in, he stayed afloat. A couple of years ago one of my colleagues at the *Telegraph* in London, Michael Shelden, asked him how he did it. "Well," said Sid, "I made money on horses and—oh, yeah—I once helped a guy try to sell Indonesia an air force."

Easier than managing Judy, I'd bet.

He proved the canniest steward of her legacy. The TV specials and weekly shows are out on DVD, and *A Star Is Born* has been lavishly restored with the half hour Jack Warner cut out, and watching them you can almost forget the camp grotesquerie that the Garland story has dwindled down to in the hands of Liza and David Gest. Like daughter, like mother; Judy is alleged to have assaulted Sid, but he didn't sue over it. And so history repeats itself. If Judy's decline was a tragedy, Liza's is a farce. Which, when you think about it, is even sadder.

Like many men about town in swingin' London, Lionel Bart, the composer of *Oliver!*, was reported on his death to have been "romantically linked to Judy Garland," a lovely formulation that tells you exactly where his real interests lay. But Sid Luft really was romantically linked to Judy, and never quite severed his affections. "She was only five foot tall—just a shrimp of a girl, really—but she had a very sensuous body and, up close, her skin was like porcelain, pure white. I was crazy about her. She had incredibly kissable lips ... You don't fall out of love with somebody like her." ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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WHO'S WHO

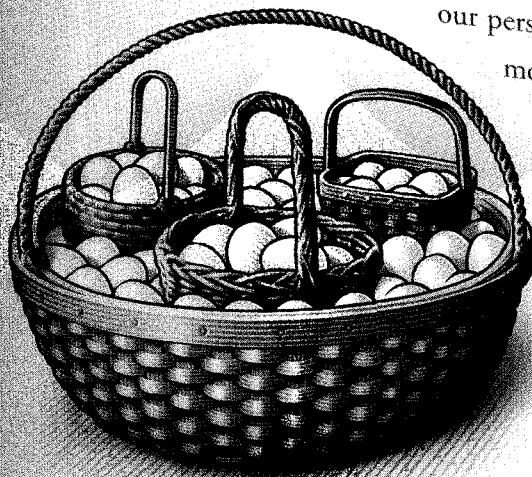
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